

Makers of Indian Literature

Upendra Thakur

Shiva Kumar Mishra

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The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodhana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From: Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi

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SAHITYA AKADEMI

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Preface

One of the leading historians of India, Professor Dr Upendra Thakur wrote a popular research book "History of Mithilā" which inspired me to work on the subject "Educational ideas and institutions in Mithilā", for my Ph.D. and his autobiography emboldened me to do research work on Mithilā's history and culture.

Professor Thakur's books are very important for any researcher who is looking to work on the history and culture of both Mithilā and Bihar. Mithilā's political, social, cultural and folk tradition were his area of expertise and without the help of his books, it is impossible to do research on any of these topics.

None of the other historians paralleled the excellence of Professor Thakur in Bihar. Over 30 foreign scholars and over 100 national scholars completed their D.Litt. and Ph.D. degree under his direction. Their thesis topics ranged from ancient history to literature, Sociology and modern History. Professor Thakur did not limit himself to a definite time period or any definite field of research apart from publishing his research book and Journals, he mentored many experts, Professor Sureshwar Jha, Padmashree Dr. Usha Kiran Khan, Professor Indra Kant Jha, Professor Dr. Nagendra Jha and many famous scholars did their research works, under his supervision. According to Padmashree Usha Kiran Khan, without Professor Thakur's help she would not have been able to complete her graduation, making it impossible to get the degrees and recognitions that she has now.

To be in Professor Thakur's contact for many years was a great honour for me. I fondly remember, once he told me that his blessings are with me and that his blessing

always bear fruit. When Sahitya Akademi, handed me the responsibility to prepare monograph on Professor Upendra Thakur, his blessings started ringing in my ears and my happiness knew no bounds.

I am obliged to the Sahitya Akademi for giving me this opportunity to prepare a monograph on one of the greatest son of Mithilā. I am also obliged to the scholars, Members and representative of Maithili language (Professor Vina Thakur) at Sahitya Akademi who chose this topic and considered me eligible for preparing a monograph on Professor Dr Upendra Thakur.

I will like to mention that the book "Researches in Indian History, Archaeology, Art and Religion (Professor Upendra Thakur Felicitation volume)", ed. By Dr G. Kuppuram and K. Kumudmani Published by Sandeep Prakashan, Delhi, 1990, proved extremely useful for writing this monograph.

Finally, I would like to thank Shri Panchanan Mishra, Dr Prafulla Kumar Singh 'Maun', Professor Bhim Nath Jha, Padamshree Usha Kiran Khan, Professor Hetukar Jha, Dr Kalpana Thakur, Shri Bhairab Lal Das, Shri Sharadindu Choudhary, Shri Ajay Nath Thakur, Dr Jayshri Mishra, Dr Umesh Chandra Dwivedi, Pt. Bhavanath Jha and other great scholars for providing invaluable contribution in preparation of this monograph. I would also like to thank my wife Kalpana Kumari, my daugther Ajita Mishra and my son Achyut Anand for helping me and bearing with me throughout this project. At last, I would like to thank typist, Sandeep Kumar Singh.

—Shiva Kumar Mishra

Life and Achievements of Professor Upendra Thakur

Mithilā is really proud of having produced a son of the calibre of Professor Upendra Thakur who began and ended his educational career as a teacher. A born teacher and inspirer of youth, Professor Thakur has produced a host of students who are now occupying key posts in several countries of South East Asia, Japan, France and America. A great believer in simple living and high thinking, with a passionate devotion for research who demanded from himself and his students highest standards in this field, Professor Upendra Thakur will always be remembered by those who came into close contact with him.

A seasoned academician and a patron of learning Professor Thakur won a name in the hierarchy of eminent scholars of India and abroad. He was a true friend to his colleagues, a noble guide to his students, a sincere adviser to his friends, a loving relation to his kinsmen and a successful pilot to educational institutions and universities. He was one of the promising doyen among the historians of the world and par excellence during his academic career. He was and will be known all over the country and abroad as a most erudite teacher who had inspired three generations of students. A true karmayogī, he was a living symbol of niṣkāma karma, as provided in the *Bhagavadgītā* who always believed in work but never expected any return there from. A versatile scholar for whom no branch of Indology as it expressed in Sanskrit literature was outside his pen, Professor Thakur devoted every moment of his life to the service of the various disci-

plines of oriental learning, never asked for anything from anybody, and like the great sage Dadhīci gave away all he had to enrich historical research and tradition. His literary and educational achievements now form inseparable chapter of the history of oriental learning.

Professor Upendra Thakur was born on January 02, 1929 at village Mowbehat in a respected Maithila Brāhmaṇa family of *Śāṇḍilya gotra* and *Dighave sanahapur mūla*, under Bajitpur P.S. in the district of Darbhanga. This village is situated 02 km from Bajitpur and 07 km south of Manigachhi block headquarter. His father Pandit Jaya Nath Thakur was a renowned *Karmakāṇḍī* and Ācārya. He was brought up and educated at primary level in the village school at Nehra and Laheriasarai (Darbhanga). He passed in first division his Matriculation from M.L. Academy Laheriasarai, Darbhanga and Intermediate from Chandradhari Mithila College, Darbhanga. At the time of his birth, even lanterns had not come into vogue. The whole village was constrained to live in a dim light of lamps burning with caster oil and mustard oil. The children somehow managed to read under the dim light of the lamp. No cemented house could be seen in the village. The roofs made from bamboos and thatch was put over the mud walls. While going to school, he had neither shoes nor sandals for footwear. He lived the life of a perfect village rustic. While at school he used pen made of reed and with powdered ink dissolved in water. He was brought up in the environment of a rural life which was fast steeped in excessive conservatism and stub-bornly advocated status quo in the social order. In 1945, at the age of 16, he passed the Intermediate examination and moved to Calcutta where his uncle Pandit Vishwanath Thakur was a teacher and Head of the department of Veda in Vishuddhanand Saraswati Sanskrit College Calcutta. He was a Bhāgavata Bhūṣaṇa Vaidika. He was the younger brother of

Pt. Jayanath Thakur (Father of Professor Upendra Thakur). As his financial condition was not good, he took jobs in newspaper offices to pursue studies further. He passed Hons. Examination in History and M.A. in Ancient Indian History and culture with distinction.

After completion of postgraduation he was admitted to the D. Phil. course to prepare dissertation on the "History of Mithilā" under the supervision of the late Professor J.N. Banerjea, Carmichael Professor and an internationally recognised authority on iconography, numismatics and epigraphy. He completed his D.Phil. in 1954. Thus, for eight years continuously he struggled hard to earn and learn. These eight years were no doubt the best years of his life which brought him face to face with stark realities of life and taught him to stand on his own and face all the odds in life with courage and conviction an asset which he exploited fully in the coming years of his life. He began his career as a Journalist in the Hindi daily Vishmabandhu published from Calcutta (1946), while he was studying in the Calcutta University for his B.A. Hons., M.A. and D.Phil degrees. He also worked as Joint Editor of the weekly Adarsha published from the same concern. Later he was invited to join the Nav Bharat Times (Calcutta edition) where he acted as Chief Sub-Editor in the night shift, and when the Times of India came to be published from Kolkata he joined its editorial staff which he left to join the Mithila Research Institute as Research Fellow in 1954.

In his journalistic life, he had carved out a distinct place for himself among the young Hindi writers and poets in fifties and his poems were regularly published in prestigious Hindi periodicals of the day such as Vishala Bharata, Hans, Aj, Balak, Kishor, Adarsh, Saraswati etc. Several articles commenting on his poetry were also published in some of the Hindi magazines of the fifties and at the same time a collection of his poems was also

published from Calcutta. But the financial condition of some of the best poets and writers of Hindi and the callous attitude of the government and the public towards them made him so miserable that he ultimately decided to give up his literary activities and take to history which was his main forte. Whatever the reason, the world of Hindi poetry lost a great visionary in him an unrepairable loss which is impossible to make up. Thus, Professor Thakur gave up writing poetry and journalism after obtaining his D. Phil. degree in 1954.

Professor Upendra Thakur was a great linguist. Though his mother tongue was Maithili, he had command over multiple languages, viz, Sanskrit, Hindi, English, Bengali, Maithili and Pali and his Knowledge of the subject was unchallengeable. He was an erudite scholar and great orator. His thought provoking and learned speech amongst the intellectuals was heard with rapt attention and in pin drop silence. What he propounded was unchallengeable.

Professor Upendra Thakur's only son Professor Vijay Thakur was a great historian who did quite a lot for the academic community in general and for historical research, in particular.

Professor Upendra Thakur's grandsons and Professor Vijay Kumar Thakur's sons are Anshuman Thakur and Abhishek Thakur. Both are engineers. Dr Kalpana Thakur the daughter-in-law of Professor Upendra Thakur is a Teacher. She is a learned lady and she had had published many research books and articles to her credit.

A seasoned journalist and Hindi poet, Professor Thakur gave up writing poetry and journalism after obtaining his D. Phil. degree. He was invited to join the Mithilā Research Institute at Darbhanga as Research Fellow in 1954 where he worked for one and half years. After that he joined G. D. College, Begusarai as lecturer of History in 1955 and only after a few months joined the

University of Gorakhpur as Assistant professor of Ancient History and after about nine months joined the Patna University again in 1956. In 1964, he joined the Magadh University as Reader in Ancient Indian and Asian Studies and after five years was elevated to the post of University Professor and Head of the Department (July 1969) from where he retired. He was also the Head of the Department of Buddhist studies from 1984. He was also the Director (additional charge) of Nava Nalanda Mahavihar, Nalanda from 29 November 1988.

Professor Upendra Thakur was an embodiment of gentlemanliness. He possessed all good virtues which adored a man. He was first a gentleman and then an educationist. As a man he led a contended life. He shared the sorrow and joys of his friends and neighbours and came to the rescue of any needy person. He never believed in building a Castle for himself or to own a big empire as most people do in this materialistic age.

Professor Thakur was very fond of tea and cigarettes but later gave up cigarettes. He was a non-vegetarian. Fish curry with rice was his favourite dish. *Sāga* was an essential part of his diet. Occasionally, he ate betel. He usually wore *dhotī-kurtā* and *baṇḍī* but he dressed up wearing suit whenever he went to a foreign country.

Professor Thakur has many facets of his personality. The historians in the country treated him as their guardian and colleague because of his rich contributions to ancient history. He was not only the historian of repute but also produced several historians of eminence. We are, at present, guiding the destiny of modern trend of interpretation in the field of Indological research and oriental studies. His writings were recognised for which he received many awards and fellowships. As a researcher and scholar, he wrote scores of research papers, got published several monographs, edited good number of volumes of historical writings on different themes, reviewed books, attended

seminars and conferences regularly and supervised his research scholars leading to the award of the Ph.D. and D.Litt. degrees. Above thirty foreigners were awarded D.Litt. and Ph.D. Degrees under his supervision. It sets a unique example for any historian of Bihar. He never missed any opportunity to actively participate in national or international seminars and conferences. His medium of writing was Maithili, Hindi and English.

A renowned historian Professor Thakur has written and edited over twenty-five books and monographs in English on different branches of Indology as well as early history and culture of south–East and East Asia. He has also published five books in Hindi including the much talked of *Sahitya aur Sanskriti: Kuchha Chintana* for which he received an award by the Rajabhasha Department of the Government of Bihar in 1988 and three books in Maithili on the history of Mithilā and her folk art (the most famous Madhubani Painting) and handicrafts which was published by the Maithili Academy, Patna. Besides this, he published nearly two hundred research papers in English, Hindi and Maithili in Indian and foreign journals, dealing with various aspects of oriental learning. He contributed twenty feature articles to Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature, Sahitya Akademi New, Delhi.

He was famous numismatist. His book *Mints and Minting in India* is a monumental work. Professor Thakur was general Secretary of Numismatic Society of India from 1975–82. He was awarded 'Akbar Silver Medal' by Numismatic Society of India for outstanding contributions to numismatic studies at its Bangalore Session. He was honoured with other famous historians in the Platinum Jubilee Session (Patna) of the Numismatic Society of India. His several research articles related to the coins were published in the different research journals and books.

The Hūṇas in India is a thoroughly original and documented work of Professor Thakur. This is another one

of his masterpieces. *History of suicide in India*, *Homicide in Ancient India*, *Some aspects of Ancient Indian History and Culture*, *Corruption in Ancient India* etc. are his excellent contributions. His book *Buddha Dharma Desh-videsha men* is Published by Bhagwan Buddha Parishad, Mahnar. In this monograph Professor Upendra Thakur has given a detail description on India, Middle East, China, Korea and Japan, Tibet and Ladakh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Burma, Malaya (Cambodia), Shyam (Thailand), Champa and Indonesia.

A recipient of several awards and honours and a widely travelled scholar, Professor Thakur has participated in and presided over a large of number of national and international conferences and seminars. It would not be out of place to mention here that he was one of the few scholars of India who was made an honorary member of the internationally famous club, 'The Explorers Club' of New York for his outstanding academic achievements in the field of Indology. He was awarded 'Akbar Silver Medal' by Numismatic Society of India for outstanding contributions to numismatic studies at its Bangalore session. He was honoured by the Numismatic Society of India at its Platinum session, Patna, 1987 along with some other imminent historians.

Deeply associated with the affairs of the Bihar Research Society, Professor Upendra Thakur was the Chief Editor of *the Journal of the Bihar Research Society*. In 1959, he became its Associate editor and in 1962 he was elected as an executive member of the Bihar Research Society. Later on, he went on to become its Vice President. His first article was published in *the Journal of the Bihar Research Society* in 1957 along with his review of the book, *History of Bihar* by R.K. Chaudhary. Besides the Bihar Research Society, he contributed immensely to several historical Societies of international fame, for instance, The Numismatic Society of India, International Buddhist Brotherhood Association etc. in various capacities such

as Vice – President, General Secretary and Chief Editor for a long period. He will be gratefully remembered by those who are keenly interested in historical researches and cultural growth. He was the Chief Editor of the proceedings of the International Buddhist Brotherhood Association, Tokyo-Bodhgaya. He was appointed to the Board of International Consultative Editors of the Journal *World of Buddhism*, the *International Buddhist Magazine* Moratuwa, Sri Lanka. He was the Chief Editor of the *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, Varanasi from 1982 to 1985. He was also a life member and General Secretary of the Numismatic Society of India, Varanasi. He was the Chief Editor of the *Mithilā Bhāratī*, published by the Maithili Academy, Patna.

As a visiting Professor, Dr Thakur delivered a series of lectures in the University of Zagreb and other Universities in Yugoslavia which he had visited for the Indo-Yugoslav Cultural Exchange Programme in 1969. Again in 1972 and 1974 he was invited to give several talks on different aspects of Buddhism and Indian Culture in Mahachulalongkorn and Chulalongkorn Universities of Thailand. After that he went abroad every year either to participate in seminars or to deliver lectures as a guest – scholar. He also visited Egypt, Italy, Germany, Austria, Russia and other countries of Europe. Professor Thakur visited Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia and Burma in the course of Lecture tours. He again visited Thailand to attend the 'Seventh Conference of the International Association of Historians of Asia' in Bangkok in August 1977 as guest – scholar. He participated in the International conference on Indian ocean studies held in Perth, Western Australia from August 15 to August 22, 1979 as an invitee scholar. He visited Kuala Lumpur in August 1980 to participate in the 'Eighth conference of the International Association of Historians of Asia' as a guest-scholar and presided over its twenty third session as panel chairman.

He attended " World Religionists Ethics Congress" as delegate from India held in Tokyo (Japan) in June, 1981. He attended the Forth conference of International Association of Buddhist Studies, held in August 1981 in the University of Wisconsin, Madison (U.S.A.) as a delegate from the Magadh University.

The Chetana Samiti the august organisation of the Maithili language, culture and art, decided that the history of Freedom movement in Mithilā should be written and it constituted a powerful committee, consisting of Professor R.K. Chaudhary, Dr J.C. Jha, Professor Upendra Thakur, Dr Jata Shankar Jha and Jata Shankar Das. He was a member of various organisations such as Bihar School Examination Board, Expert Committee, Bihar State Archaeology and Museum, Patna, Bihar Hindi Granth Academy, Patna, Indian Archaeological Congress, Maithili Academy, Bodhgaya Temple Management Committee, International Association of Historians of Asia, Indian History and Culture Association, Indian Archaeological Congress, Bodhgaya Temple Advisory Board, etc. He organised Indian History Congress in Gaya.

Professor Thakur never believed in politics of convenience and personal benefits in an age of self-seekers and sycophants, and always called a spade a spade. For this he had to pay a heavy price. Although Professor Thakur was the supervisor of Professor Nagendra Jha a heavy weight politician of Bihar but in spite of his erudite learning and vast scholarship he could not achieve that position and success in the worldly sense which he so richly deserved. He always supported Dr Nagendra Jha in the assembly elections. In fact, he belonged to that tradition of saint-scholars who gave away their everything for the sake of humanity without expecting any return for their sacrifices. He was a staunch believer in God and His inviolable decree. He believed in facing any problem with an implicit faith in Him, because divine dispention, however severe and unjust

it might appear to the uninitiated, is always just that anyone can think of. A perfect gentleman large-hearted, generous and loyal to friends he was, by all standard, an ideal academician whose life should serve as a source of inspiration to all of us.

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Works on Maithili and Mithilā

Professor Upendra Thakur was a great son of Mithilā. When we talked to him about Mithilā and Maithili language, we found that he was a true Maithila, embodying all good virtues and rich tradition and culture of Mithilā. His valuable contributions to the history of Mithilā and Maithili language are exemplary and every Maithila and non-maithila researchers remember him with highest regards. It is generally seen that our scholars neglect their mother tongue they are so very much wrapped in a particular discipline that they have no time to do any service to their mother tongue. There have been ample example to the contrary, and in Mithilā itself we have a number of scholars from medieval times, with the origin and establishment of Maithili language who have rendered service to Maithili in addition to their own field of discipline, beginning with Halāyudha and Jyotirīśvara. Professor Thakur presided over many Maithili literary conferences, lectures and seminars, wrote some outstanding books on different aspects of Maithili language and literature. By his living example, he guided young scholars of Mithilā and drew their attention to the rich treasures and to the beauty of their mother tongue.

The contribution of Professor Thakur, to the cultural heritage of Mithilā, are quite important. It is true, some Paṇḍitas of Mithilā had made their contributions to some aspects of its history, but they mainly centred round the eulogies af Janaka, Yājñavalkya, Brahmanical and Upaniṣadic works, which have no bearing on the scientific history of the land, and as such they are not worth calling history at all. His first pioneer work was the *History of*

Mithilā published in 1956 and 2nd edition in 1988. His studies in Jainism and Buddhism in Mithilā is an excellent work which for the first time tries to establish that the Jainism and Buddhism was also well taken in Maithil Society. He was the first Maithila scholar to have written two monographs folk art of Mithilā (i) Madhubani Painting in English, which is published by Abhinava Publication in 1982 and (ii) *Mithilāka Citrakalā O Śilpakalā* in Maithili which is published by the Maithili Academy, Patna in 1987. His *Mithilāka Itihasa* (Published by Maithili Academy, 1980) shows his love for mother tongue. His third Maithili book is *Mithilāka Śāsvata Sādhanā*, Published by Mithilā Gourav Prakashan, Patna in 1988. There are four chapters in this book. First chapter in this book is cultural survey of Mithilā. In second chapter Professor Thakur has described educational system of ancient Mithilā. The last Karṇāṭa King **Harisiṃhadeva** and Nepal is described in the third chapter and in the last chapter Professor Thakur has described about the great Poet of Mithilā Vidyāpati and Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism.

Professor Thakur's other monograph on Mithilā is *Aspects of Society and Economy of Medieval Mithilā*. This is based on the inaugural lectures delivered by him in Chandradhari Mithila College, Darbhanga on May 10–11, 1983. The monograph discusses some important aspects of socio-economic life of medieval Mithilā which had not yet fully attracted the attention of the historians.

Professor Upendra Thakur has written over seven books on cultural heritage of Mithilā and Maithili. He has also written over forty research articles on this subject. Three articles in Maithili has been published in the Smārikā of Chetana Samiti Patna such as *Mithilāka Prathama Rājavaṃśa, Mithilāka eka Sāṃskṛtika Sarvekṣaṇa* and *Vidyāpatika Likhanāvalī: Eka Adhyayana*. His *Mithilāka Prasiddha Dārśanika: Vācaspati Miśra* was published in the *Mithilā Bhāratī*, Vol.-4 (a Maithili research Journal of Maithili Sahitya Sansthan, Patna).

His Maithili book *Mithilāk Itihāsa* is divided in to two parts. Four chapters are in the first part. In the first chapter Professor Upendra Thakur has described origin and name of Mithilā. In second and third chapter he has given detailed descriptions of monarchy and republic in Videha and in fourth chapter he has described the outsiders administration over Mithilā region. Second Part of the book consists three chapters such as Karṇāṭa and Oinavāra dynasties of Mithilā and the socio–economic cultural position of Mithilā. This book is the Maithili edition of his famous and pioneer English work 'History of Mithilā'. The second Maithili book *Mithilāka Citrakalā O Śilpakalā* is also published by the Maithili Academy, Patna. This book is a short Maithili version of his English work the Madhubani Painting. This is divided in to seven chapters. In first chapter Professor Thakur has described the origin and development of the painting. Second chapter consist detail description of the land of Mithilā. In this chapter, he has given the political survey and cultural evaluation of Mithilā. In the third chapter of his present work he has written the detail description of the art of Mithilā, its origin and development, *Aripana* or *bhūmicitra* and its religious background. In fourth chapter Professor Thakur has described the wall painting. He has given description of Brāhmaṇa and Kāyastha style of Painting and other castes style of Painting its Socio-economic and religious background. In the fifth chapter he has described other arts of Mithilā such as terracotta, Sikkiware, Sujanī, godanā, Śyāmā Cakevā etc. In the appendix Professor Thakur has mentioned the famous artist of Mithilā such as Padmashri Jagdamba Devi, Padmashri Gaṅgā Devi, Mahasundari Devi, Sita Devi, Godavari Devi, Chandrakala Devi, Yamuna Devi, Mira Devi, etc.

He was actively involved with organisations related to Mithilā and Maithili.When the Chetana Samiti, the

august organisation of the Maithili language, art and culture, decided that the history of freedom movement in Mithilā should be written they constituted a committee of scholars, consisting Professor R.K. Choudhary, Dr J.C. Jha, Professor Upendra Thakur, Dr Jata Shankar Jha, and Jata Shankar Das. He was the member of the Maithili Sahitya Sansthan Patna. He was a member of Maithili Academy as well. He was the Editor of Mithilā Bhāratī, Published by Maithili Academy, Patna.

He reviewed a number of books related to Mithilā and Maithili. His review of *Mithilā in the age of Vidyāpati* and *A Survey of Maithili Literature* by R.K. Choudhary were published in Indian Historical Review, New Delhi, 1977 and 1978 respectively. A review of *A Survey of Maithili Literature*, by R. K. Choudhary was also published in the *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*. Over twenty-seven book reviews by Professor Thakur were published in different, research books and Journals.

His paper "A Note on the Development and Growth of Maithili Literature" published in the *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, Patna, Vol- 65–66 is an excellent work on the origin of Maithili Literature. As a renowned numismatist, he wrote many articles related to numismatics on Mithilā.

Professor Upendra Thakur encouraged many research Scholars for writing on the development of the Maithili language and literature and cultural heritage of Mithilā. He guided Professor Dr Indrakant Jha to his D.Litt. degree on topic of "Vidyāpati ke Sanskṛta Kāvyoṃ Kā Eka Sarvekṣaṇa". Under his guidance several renowned Research Scholars such as Professor Dr Aquique (Economic History of Mithilā), Professor Dr Yugal Kishor Mishra (History of Aṅga) Professor Dr Kapileshwar Jha (Kathānaka Nirmāṇaka Sandarbha Me Maithilī Upanyāsaka Vikāsa), Professor Dr K.S. Karmashil (An Evaluation of Caṇḍeśvara as Political Thinker), Professor

Dr Sureshwar Jha (Political Thinkers of Mithilā), Professor Dr Nagendra Jha (Maithilī Sāhitya Me Rāstrīya Bhāvanā) and many others completed their Ph.D. degrees. Among above mentioned Professor Dr Kapileswer Jha and Dr Nagendra Jha wrote their thesis in Maithili.

This of course, inspired many a young Maithili Scholars to contribute to the various aspects of their history and culture in their mother tongue. In Professor Upendra Thakur will be always remembered for these aforementioned works, dealing with the history of Mithilā, and the historical background of Maithili literature and language along with a comparative and analytical study of Maithili literature.

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History of Mithilā

The first pioneer work, dealing with the History of Mithilā based on scientific research, was the *History of Mithilā* by Professor Upendra Thakur, published by the Mithila Research Institute Darbhanga in 1956. It is true, some Paṇḍitas of Mithilā had made their contributions to some aspects of its history, but they mainly centred round the eulogies of Janaka, Yājñavalkya, Brahmanical and Upanishadic works which have no bearing on the scientific history of the land and as such they are not worth calling history at all. While different aspects of Magadhan History had been thoroughly dealt with either in general books on Indian history or in specialised studies, there had been practically no systematic work on the history of Mithilā before this book. The reason was quite clear. Materials, mainly archaeological, was lacking for the reconstruction of the history of Mithilā, and whatever work has been done so far is based mainly on literary sources. The archaeological institutions had not yet extended its activities beyond Vaishali, though innumerable important archaeological sites were still waiting for the excavators' spade in different parts of Mithilā. Despite these limitations, Professor Thakur had made a bold attempt to prepare a comprehensive history of Mithilā.

It was a welcome sign that the book *History of Mithilā* had been written in a systematic and scientific way, by a son of the soil. Professor Thakur had utilised new literary and archaeological material to throw fresh light on different phases of Mithilā's past. The *History of Mithilā* was the result of his three years' labour at the Calcutta University, which awarded him the D. Phil. Degree for this book.

The book is divided in to eight chapters in first edition and fifteen chapters in second edition with various sub sections and headings. It deals not only with the history of Mithilā from the earliest times to the establishment of Mughal rule, but also with the social, economic, cultural and political activities of people of Mithilā in different ages. Professor Thakur has spared no pains in collecting all possible materials, hither to available related to it and had tried to interpret them in a new way. Chapters on the cultural history of Mithilā in different ages are refreshing. His views of the social system introduced by the Karṇāṭa ruler Harisiṃhadeva are original, and he boldly departs from the hitherto accepted views of the previous writers. In utilising the different but divergent source materials, Professor Thakur has made a very judicious use of them. His impartiality in judgement is evident from the fact that in suggesting his own point of view he has taken in to full consideration the views and conclusion of others. The main achievement of Professor Thakur lies in collecting facts spread over a vast range and in carefully interpreting them. The work is a pioneer effort, and still the best written on the topic.

In chapter I of the first edition of the History of Mithilā, Professor Upendra Thakur has given an idea of the historical and geographical position of Mithilā, its foundation and different interpretations of its mythical names, and the various sources from which informations relating to the history of Mithilā have been gleaned.

According to Professor Thakur there are few regions of India possessing an ancient civilisation, about which we have less definite historical information than the region north of the Gaṅgā, variously known as Videha, Tīrabhukti, or (after the name of its capital) Mithilā. Mithilā, the country of the Maithilas is the name for the tract lying between 25° 28´and 26° 52´ N latitude and between 84° 56´ and 86° 46´E. longitude. It is bounded on

the north by the Himalayas, and on the east, south and west by the rivers Kosi, Gaṅgā and Gaṇḍakī respectively. It comprised the present commissionaries of Tirhut, Darbhanga, Kosi, Purnea, north part of Munger and Bhagalpur and Terai under Nepal lying between these commissionaries and lower ranges of the Himalayas. It is a well-marked natural region with its size varying in different ages. Geographically this portion of the gangetic plain enclaved in the riverine triangle of the Gaṅgā, Gaṇḍaka and Kosi about 400 km in length and 160 km in breadth is physically a flat country in its contours, with an elevation of 60.96 meters and hardly any undulations anywhere expect for the Sumeshwar and Dun hills at the extreme north with elevations varying between 60.96 meters and 879.0432 meters above the sea level.

Covering an area of about 64,000 square km. almost equal in size of Sri Lanka, just about double of the size of Belgium, one and a half times bigger than Denmark and a little less than half the size of England, Mithilā appears, if you fly over it, a vast green spot nestling at the foot of the Himalayas, girdled with sparkling serpentine frills of the Gaṇḍaka, Gaṅgā and Kosi. But if you go by land in winter you will enter into an enchanting fairy land full of white and yellow flowers of linseed and mustard (oil bearing crop) interspersed here, there and everywhere amidst an endless panorama of lush green paddy and wheat fields. Glittering ponds with carpets of red and white water-lilies and round leaned water-vines of Makhana (Eurayle) for which this land is famous all over the country, the dense mango-groves with exotic flowering shoots and intoxicating aroma, and the courtyards at hamlets with profuse flowering plants of orleanders (kaner) and Hibiscus (orhul), will be enchanting for your eyes. And if you are physically done up in your sojourn across the land and knock at a wayside door for some rest, the warm hospitality of the land will spontaneously appear before you in the shape of a pot of

water and a dish of curd and flat rice with sprinkle of white or brown sugar on it.

According to the Purāṇas, Mithilā extended from the river Kauśikī in east to Gaṇḍakī in the west and from the Gaṅgā in the south to the forest of the Himalayas in the north.

> *Gaṅgā himavatormadhye nadī pañcadaśāntare /*
> *tairabhuktiriti khyāto deśaḥ paramaśobhanaḥ / /*
> *Kauśikīṃ tu samārabhya Gaṇḍakī-madhigamya vai /*
> *Yojanāni caturviṃśadāyāmaḥ parikīrttitaḥ / /*
> *Gaṅgā pravāhamārabhya*
> *yāvaddhaimavataṃ vanaṃ /*
> *Vistāraḥ ṣoḍaśaḥ prokto deśasya kulanandana / /*
>
> —Bṛhad-Viṣṇupurāṇa, 2.5.

The *Śakti Saṅgama-Tantra* says that from the banks of the Gaṇḍakī to the forest of Campā, the country is called Videha, also known as Tīrabhukti.

> *Gaṇḍakī-tīramārabhya campāraṇyāntakaṃ Śive /*
> *Videha-bhūḥ samākhyātā tairabhuktābhidaḥ sa tu / /*
>
> —Śaktisaṅgama Tantra: 7.27

Famous Maithila poet Chanda Jha supported the Bṛhad Viṣṇu Purāṇa.

> *Gaṅgā bahathi janika dakṣiṇa disi pūrva*
> *kauśikī dhārā /*
> *paścima bahathi Gaṇḍakī Uttara himavata*
> *van vistārā / /*

According to Professor Upendra Thakur, Mithilā has played a noteworthy part in the political and cultural life of ancient India. It has witnessed the rise and fall of great

monarchies and republics. On the greatness of the state of Mithilā.

The Mahābhārata (III.134.5.) says:

Sarve rājño maithilasya mainākasyaiva parvatāḥ /
Nikṛṣṭabhūtā rājāno. . . / /

In the history of humankind, he thought Mithilā has carved out a place of unique distinction. It has been the land of Janaka, Yājñavalkya, Gautama, Kaṇāda, Jaimini and Kapila. It was the birthplace of the republic. Vaishali, a town within its border, became the renowned strong hold of Jaina and Buddhist religions and philosophy.

Professor Thakur says that the origin of the words 'Videha and Mithilā' as given in ancient literature, is purely mythical. According to Julius Eggeling this country was in those days the extreme land of the Aryans. The country is said to have derived its name from King Videgha Māthava or Videha Mādhava who came from the banks of the Sarasvatī. A legend in the *Śatapatha Brãhmaṇa* tells us that Agni Vaiśvānara went burning along the earth from Sarasvatī towards the east, followed by Māthava and his priest Gotama Rahūgaṇa until he came to the river Sadānīrā (Gaṇḍaka)

On the basis of epics and Purãṇas, Professor Thakur says Mithi, the son of Nimi founded a Kingdom here which was named Mithilā after him. As a city-builder, he was called Janaka. According to the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa:

Nimeḥ putrastu tatraiva mithirnāmā mahān smṛtaḥ /
Prathamaṃ bhujabalairyena tairahūtasya pārsvatah.
Nirmmitaṃ svīyanāmna ca Mithilāpuramuttamaṃ
purījananasāmarthyāt janakaḥ sa ca kīrttitaḥ.

Rāmāyaṇa says that he was named Mithi because of his birth from attrition. He was also called Janaka on account

of his extraordinary birth, and "Videha" as his father was bodiless. The country thus named after him, was henceforward known as "Mithilā".

> *Araṇyāṃ mathyamānāyāṃ prādurbhūto mahātapaḥ /*
> \+ + + +
> *Mithirnāma mahātejāstenāyaṃ maithilo-bhavat //*
> Rāmāyaṇa VII, 57.10.20.

According to Professor Thakur, we have an interesting account of the origin of this land told in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* closely followed by *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*. The *Bhāgvata Purāṇa* explains how the country came to be known as Mithilā. The first mythical or traditional king of this part of the country was Nimi. He was doomed to die by the curse of his preceptor, Vaśiṣṭha, who was a great sage and who was enraged by Nimi due to employing another priest. Gautama, to officiate at a sacrifice without Vaśiṣṭha's permission. After his death, all the great Ṛṣis of the time assembled and implored his spirit to re-assume human form. As he refused to do so, they bestowed on him, a mystical blessing that he should live for ever in the human eye, and taking his dead body, they placed it in a churn in the hope they might thus produce a son in his likeness. They were successful and a son emerged from the churn and was named Mithi, who succeeded his father as a King. His country came to be known after him as Mithilā.

According to Professor Thakur, besides Mithilā, it has various other names too, such as Videha, Tīrabhukti, Tapobhūmi, Śambhavī, Suvarṇa-kānana, Māntili, Vaijayantī (Janakapur) etc. But of all these names Mithilā, Videha and

> *Mithilā, tairabhuktiśca, vaidehī, naimikānanaṃ.*
> *Jñānaśilaṃ, kṛpāpīṭhaṃ, svarṇalāṅgala-paddhatiḥ.*

Jānakī janmabhūmiśca nirapekṣā vikalmaṣā.
Rāmānandakarī, viśvabhāvanī, nityamaṅgalā.
Iti dvādaśa, namāni, Mithilāyāḥ. . .

Bṛhad Viṣṇupurāṇa.

Tīrabhukti are well known to the tradition and to the history as well. The name Videha occurs first of all in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. Tīrabhukti or Tirhut is a later term. The name Mithilā is older than Tīrabhukti or Tirhut. It has been described as a place situated along the banks of three big rivers Gaṅgā, Gaṇḍakī and Kauśikī. It thus seems that Tīrabhukti is evidently derived from *tīra* and *bhukti*. The inscription *Tīrabhuktau Vaiśālī Tārā* discovered in the Basarh Excavations, 1903–04. In ancient times, Mithilā or Tirhut comprised the kingdom of Vaiśālī which had become part of the Videhan kingdom, under Janaka Ugrasena, and at least three other Janakas after him. According to Cunningham the Videhan Kingdom extended from the district of Darbhanga to that of Munger.

Professor Thakur has described the various sources which are utilized in his work. The sources are almost the same which provided the basis of the history of ancient India as a whole. The Vedas except the last book of *Atharvaveda*, make no direct contribution. It is the Brāhmaṇas that gives us the largest amount of information about the early dynasties. These are *Śatapatha* including the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, *Taittirīya*, *Aitareya* and *Pañcaviṃśa* as well as the *Chāndogya* and other principal Upaniṣads.

The records of the Buddhists and Jainas about the philosophical ideas current at the time of Buddha and Mahāvīra are of importance to the historians of that epoc. The Mahāpanāda Jātaka, Gandhāra Jātaka, Suruci Jātaka, Mahājanaka Jātaka, Nimi Jātaka, Mahānārada Kassapa Jātaka etc. supply us with valuable material for a picture of the political and cultural life of the times. The

Jaina scriptures too, in this respect, are no less important. Works like the Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Purāṇas provide us with important material for the history of our period. Besides the above-mentioned sources, Gilgit MSS. accounts of foreign travellers, some medieval Sanskrit Literarture Pañjī and other archaeological materials are important documents.

In IInd chapter of his work Professor Thakur has tried to present a full picture of the Janaka dynasty, the later Videhas, their fall, and the political, social, economic and religious conditions and philosophical attainments during the period. He says, that the Videhan dynasty was descended from Ikṣvāku's son Nimi who is called Videha, and was the branch of the solar race. It has been mentioned in five Puranas. Its earlier history down to Sīradhvaja is given in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

The Purāṇas fairly agree about the rest of the genealogy except that after Sakuni, the *Viṣnu, Garuḍa* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* insert twelve Kings-Arjuna to Upagupta- whom the *Vāyu* and Brahmāṇḍa omit. The Purāṇas, however, supply us a complete list of the kings of this dynasty. They generally agree that Kuśadhvaja was Sīradhvaja's younger brother and King of Sāṅkāśya. The list of the names of the Kings supplied by the Purāṇas is quite long. There are altogether fifty-four kings there including the later Videhas.

On the basis of literary sources, Professor Thakur says, Hrasvaromā had sons Sīradhvaja and Kuśadhvaja. Sīradhvaja is identified with Janaka II, the father of Sītā. Janaka, mentioned in connection with Yājñavalkya, cannot be identified with the father of Sītā. Sīradhvaja had defeated and killed the king of Sāṅkāśya and installed his brother Kuśadhvaja on the throne there. It is therefore, clear that Sīradhvaja Janaka, father of Sītā and the contemporary of the Ikṣvāku King Daśaratha, Rāma's father and Atithigva was not the great philosopher King of the

Vedic texts. The following is the list of kings from Nimi down to Sīradhvaja Janaka who ruled Mithilā and about whom all the Purāṇas are in substantial agreement except the Garuḍa which omits the first two Kings and makes Udāvasu of this dynasty son of Prasuśruta of Ayodhyā:

(1) Nimi, (2) Mithi, (3) Udāvasu, (4) Nandivardhana, (5) Suketu, (6) Devarāta, (7) Bṛhadratha, (or Bṛhaduktha), (8) Mahāvīra, (9) Sudhṛti, (10) Dhṛṣṭaketu, (11) Haryaśva, (12) Maru, (13) Pratīndhaka, (14) Kīrttiratha, (15) Devamīḍha, (16) Vibhudha, (17) Mahīdhraka, (18) Kīrttirāta, (19) Mahāromā, (20) Svarṇaromā, (21) Hrasvaromā, and (22) Sīradhvaja (Janaka ll).

Kṛta or Kṛti Janaka was a great philosopher King of Mithilā. He was son of Bahulāśva and the pupil of Hiraṇyanābha. Kṛti Janaka and Yājñavalkya belonged to the same time as both of them were the pupils of Hiraṇyanābha. Yājñavalkya was thus friend and contemporary of kṛti Janaka a descendant of Sīradhvaja Janaka in the eighteenth generation. Rhys Davids is inclined to identify Janaka with Mahājanaka of the Jātaka. Some scholars identify the Vedic Janaka with Mahājanka 1 of the Jātaka. But it seems the Vedic Janaka (Kṛti Janaka) is identical with Mahā Janaka 2 of the Jātaka. Some scholars think that the identification of Kṛti of the Purāṇas with Karāla Janaka who brought the line of the Videhan King to an end is more reasonable. But, from Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* we learn that one Karāla Janaka married a Brāhmaṇa's daughter and brought about his ruin thereby. Kṛti Janaka, the great philosopher king, cannot be compared to a king who is represented as a debauch. Karāla, therefore must have been a later king who by his shameless deeds brought an end to this line.

Professor Thakur says if according to a Purāṇic-tradition, we place Parīkṣita in the 14^{th} century B. C., we must place this Janaka in about the middle of the 12^{th} century B.C. This is plausible keeping in view the

place of Janamejaya, only a step above Janaka and the time of the composition of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* clearly mentions Yājñavalkya as the pupil of Uddālaka Āruṇi. Kahoḍa was pupil of the same Uddālaka and was therefore, the contemporary of Yājñavalkya. Guṇākhya was the pupil of Kahoḍa and, therefore, ranks only a step below Yājñavalkya. Yājñavalkya was the author of many yajuses, and compiler of the *White Yajurveda*. This would place Guṇākhya in the very beginning of the Yajurvedic period. He could not evidently have been the *Gṛhya-Sutrakāra*, for the *Gṛhya Sutras*, as a class literature, are of a later date. Moreover, if we treat Guṇākhya as contemporary with Āssalāyana Sāvathi and Gautama Buddha, and, therefore, with Prasenajit and Bimbisāra it would bring down Kahoḍa and Yājñavalkya only a step above Gautama Buddha. Yājñavalkya, however, can not belong to the time of Gautama Buddha. Guṇākhya lived earlier than Gautama Buddha.

According to Professor Thakur Kṛti Janaka was the most notable figure of his age. A great patron of philosophy and learning his court was thronged with Brāhmaṇas like Aśvala, Jaratkārava, Yājñavalkya, Bhujyu Lāhyāyani, Uśasti, Kahoḍa, Gārgī Vācaknavī, Uddālaka Āruni from Kosala and Kuru countries.

On the basis of the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, Professor Thakur says that King Sudhanvā of Sāṅkāśya was a powerful, and ambitious King with a lust for conquest. He attacked Mithilā, the capital of Sīradhvaja Janaka, and was killed in the battle. Sīradhvaja fought and killed him. He then placed his brother Kuśadhvaja on the throne of Sāṅkāśya. This Sānkāśya is said to have been situated near Mathurā, Perhaps, on the river Ikṣumatī.

After Sīradhvaja Janaka, we find some of his descendants who ruled over Mithilā. Buddhist texts also tell us about several later Videhan Kings. But Professor Thakur says the Jātaka accounts are so confused that it

is very difficult to arrive at any definite results regarding the identity of these King. The Jaina and Buddhist sources show how the Videhan Kings, one after another, renounced the world and became an ascetic without caring for their Kingdom or people. Patrons of learning and culture, the earlier Videhan monarchs were also great warriors. But later Videhas, it seems were too much influenced by Buddhism to take up arms against their enemies. Professor Thakur says the later Kings of Videha preferred luxury to welfare of the people. It is said that Karāla Janaka carried off a Brāhmaṇa's daughter and brought about his ruin thereby.

> *Karāla-janakaścaiva hatvā Brāhmaṇa-kanyakāṃ* /
> *Avāpa Bhraṃśamapyevaṃ na tu seje na mamanthaṃ* / /
> Buddhacarita,

He was attacked and killed by his subjects because of his immorality and wickedness. As in Rome, so in Videha, the overthrow of the monarchy was followed by the rise of a republic. Thus, this republic was the oldest republic of the world.

In the third chapter, he has given a review of the Vajjian confederacy, of which Mithilā or Videha is a significant component in the light of up to date materials with particular emphasis on the social and cultural aspects of the period. He says the Buddhist and Jaina texts refer to Videha and Vaiśālī as a single geographical and political unit in some places and as different units in other places. The Licchavis formed a significant constituent of the Vajjian confederacy that ruled over the Vajji or Vṛji country. The seat of power now shifted from Mithilā to Vaiśālī. The Vajjis included eight Confederate clans of whom the Videhas, the Licchavis, the Jñātris and the Vajjis proper were the most important. Besides these, the Ugras, the

Bhogas, the Aikṣvākas and the Kauravas were also associated with the jñatris and the Licchavis as the members of the same assembly.

For the reasons of the decline of the Vajjian confederacy, several courses are attributed to the decline and fall this most powerful republic (C. 543–44 B.C.). This republic was too strong to be conquered by easy means. It was therefore, natural that Magadhan emperors should resort to some different means to materialise plan successfully. Thanks to the shrewd policy of Bimbisāra who, by war and marriage (with the ruling families of Madra, Kosala, and Vaiśālī) had paved the way for the realisation of the great in imperialistic design of his son and successor Ajātaśatru (Vedehīputto). He not only humbled Kosala and permanently annexed Kāśi but also absorbed the state of Vaiśālī.

In chapter four Professor Thakur has dealt with the subjugation of Mithilā by various outside powers coming one after another from different parts of India, for a period of about fourteen hundred years. He says that the decline and fall of the Vajjian confederacy constitutes a land mark in the history of ancient India.

The centre of political gravity, which had already shifted from Mithilā to Vaiśālī in the preceding period shifted now to Pāṭaliputra, the capital of the Magadhan empire. With the fall of the mighty Licchavis, Ajātaśatru occupied Vaiśālī and became master of Tirhut. It is also probable that he carried his victorious arms to the foot of the mountains and the whole country between the Gaṅgā and the Himalayas became direct part to the sovereignty of Magadha. The foundation of Pāṭaliputra was laid down in this very period as the victor had erected a fortress at the village of Pāṭali, on the bank of the Gaṅgā to curb his Licchavis opponents. The foundation of the city nestling under the shelter of the devoid fortress was laid by his son Udaya or Udayin. Though shorn of her grandeur Vaiśālī, continued to be the centre of political and religious life

north of the Gaṅgā and commanded a great influence over the followers of Buddhism and Jainism. This is clear from the fact that in the following age Śiśunāga, Ajātaśatru's successor and "the destroyer of the glory of the Pradyotas", has a royal resident at Vaiśālī, which ultimately became his capital. Vaiśālī probably continued to be a secondary capital till the time of the Nandas. In the Mauryan period, Vaiśālī seems to have continued as the headquarter of the provincial administration. Aśoka visited Vaiśālī (C.250 B.C.) which lay on the road between Pāṭaliputra and Nepal. He erected a lion-pillar there, though he is said to have removed a part of the sacred relics of Buddha. Nepal probably formed as integral part of the empire at that time, and was administered directly from the capital, Pāṭaliputra as one of the home provinces. On the basis of archaeological evidences, Professor Thakur says that in the time of Aśoka Vaiśālī continued as one of the most important headquarters of the Magadhan territories.

According to Professor Thakur, Aśoka's death gave an impetus to the bent-up forces to raise their heads. The policy of non-violence had its disastrous consequences. The entire country was thrown in doldrums. Indian history for the time being lost its unity. The finale came when Bṛhadratha, the last Mauryan King, was assassinated by his general Puṣyamitra. This Puṣyamitra Śuṅga belonged to the well-known family of Bhāradvājas. The Himalayan regions including Mithilā and Vaiśālī besides the whole of North Eastern India, remained under the aegis of Pāṭaliputra under the direct supervision of the Śuṅgas. Of all, the Brāhmaṇas of Mithilā must have welcomed the advent of a Brahmanic power, as Puṣyamitra Śuṅga ardently championed their cause. A champion of militant Brahmanism, he revived and re-established the ancient priestly traditions by holding two Aśvamedha sacrifices. His successors Agnimitra and Vasumitra successfully maintained their control over the territories, but we have

no particular references to the regions under review. The last King Devabhūti was tragically killed by his *āmātya* Vāsudeva, who brought about the fall of this dynasty.

When the princes of the Śuṅga family became weak, the Kāṇvas usurped power and ruled like the Peshwās. Their rule was shortlived and they were soon swept off their feet by the so called Āndhras or Sātavāhanas. The relationship between the Mitras and the Śuṅgas or Kāṇvas is not known.

Professor Thakur says, from the first century B.C. to the rise of the Kuṣāṇas particularly Kaniṣka (78 A.D.) the history of Magadha and that of North Eastern India are shrouded in obscurity. The first notable representative of the Kuṣāṇas was Vima Kadaphises. But the most important King of the line was Kaniṣka during whose time the Kuṣāṇas enjoyed the mastery of a wide dominion including Banaras, Mathurā, Kosala and Pāṭaliputra. Kaniṣka founded and era and completed the Kuṣāṇa conquest of upper India. Based on the archaeological findings, Professor Thakur says that Kaniṣkas reign had already extended as for as Tirhut and its neighbouring tracts. He does not know anything definite about the history of Mithilā after the Kuṣāṇas. After Kuṣāṇas Bhāraśiva are belived to have been the former rules of Mithilā. The Vākāṭakas flourished a little before the advent of the Guptas in the region between Bundelkhand and Kṛṣṇā. The later Vākāṭaka power witnessed the revival of the Licchavi power.

In the fifth chapter Professor Thakur has given a review of the Gupta and Vardhana periods. He says that the curtain raised with the marriage of Candragupta 1 with the Licchavi princess Kumāradevī as that event led to the emergence of another important dynasty, second only to the Mauryas, in India. This matrimonial alliance was of considerable importance in the political history of the country in which Mithilā played a dominant role. The ancient lineage and tradition of the Licchavis helped the status of the

unknown Guptas and the alliance between the two led to the amalgamation of the Gupta principality with the Licchavi state which seems to have asserted its independence after the decline of the Kuṣāṇas. It has been rightly held by some scholars that the use of tribal names implies that a vestige of the old republican constitution still persisted among the Licchavis. Candragupta succeeded to power and secured a paramount position in Magadha and in the neighbouring countries since the Licchavis were controlling a wide area from Pāṭaliputra to the confines of Nepal. With the union between the Guptas and the Licchavis, there appeared on the political scene another powerful empire with its head-quarters at Pāṭaliputra. Like his grandfather Candragupta II further strengthened his empire through a diplomatic and matrimonial alliance with the Vākāṭaka King which laid the foundation of the Gupta imperial system.

Professor Thakur says according to the Purāṇic statement, Candragupta I's rule scheme to have been confined only to Magadh, Prayāga and Sāketa. Thus, the Purāṇic statement does not include Vaiśālī in the list of the possession of Candragupta I. Allan's view that Vaiśālī was one of Candragupta's earliest conquests is, therefore, untenable. Nor does Vaiśālī occurs in the list of Samudragupta's acquisitions, though the reference to Nepal as a border state in the famous Allahabad Praśasti may suggest that Vaiśālī or Mithilā was part of his dominions. Based on gold coin of Candragupta I and Kumāradevī it is said that both were the administrator of Gupta Empire in which Vaiśālī or North Bihar was included. Their son and successor Samudragupta also ruled over Pāṭaliputra and Vaiśālī. In Prayāga Praśasti Samudragupta proclaimed himself as Licchavi *dauhitra*. It shows that he was the representative of both, the Gupta and Licchavis.

According to Professor Thakur, Vaiśālī first appears definitely as a Gupta possession in the time of Candragupta II. It constituted a viceroyalty under an imperial prince.

During his time Tīrabhukti formed one of the several bhuktis i.e, Puṇḍravarddhanabhukti, Nagarabhukti, Śrāvastībhukti and Ahicchatrabhukti, all situated in the Gaṅgā valley. Vaiśālī was at that time much more powerful than the family of petty chiefs. It's very likely that it formed the headquarters of one of the districts of the Gupta empire, evidently of Tīrabhukti (Tīrabhuktau Vaiśālī Tārā, i.e. the Tārā of Vaiśālī in Tīrabhukti). The seals of officials found in the Basarh excavations of 1903–04 were probably attached to letters addressed by imperial officers to the governors of chiefs of that district i.e., a city magistrate residing as Vaiśālī. Among them we have one seal of Ghaṭotkacagupta. Professor Thakur says the Basarh seals also throw some interesting side light on the provincial and municipal government as well as the economic organisation of the province of Tīrabhukti. The province was governed by Prince Govindagupta, a son of emperor Candragupta II by Mahādevī Dhruvasvāminī. He had his headquarters at Vaiśālī. The seals discovered in the excavation of 1903–04 and 1913–14 by Block and spooner respectively mention several officials Uparika (Governor), the Kumārāmātya (cadet minister); the Mahāpratīhāra (the great chamberlain); Talavara (General or local Chief); the Mahādaṇḍanāyaka (the great Commandent); the Vinayasthitisthāpaka and the Bhaṭāśvapati (Lord of the Army and Cavalry). Besides the above, the following officers are mentioned *Yuvarājapadīya Kumāra-āmātya-adhikaraṇa, Raṇabhāṇḍāgāra-adhikaraṇa, Balādhikaraṇa, Daṇḍapāśa-adhikaraṇa, Tīrabhuktau Vinayasthiti- sthāpaka-adhikaraṇa Vaiśālī-adhiṣṭhānādhikaraṇa, Śrīparama-bhaṭṭāraka-pādīya Kumārāmātya-adhikaraṇa.*

After Candragupta II, Kumāragupta and his successors Purugupta and Skandagupta controlled the regions intact, though all of them had to bear the brunt of the ferocious Hūṇa invasions. The death of Skandagupta

saw the mighty empire crumbling away almost before the eyes of the existing generation, due to troubles both internal and external. This led to the growth of a class of hereditary Governors and other officials who commanded enormous influence in local centres and assumed the titles of Mahārāja and Mahārājādhirāja. After Kumāragupta II Kramāditya (AD. 473–74), of the Sarnath inscription, came Budhagupta, who is referred to as having reigned over the earth, in the two dated identical votive inscription from Sarnath. The Puṇḍravarddhanabhukti in the time of Budhagupta probably, extended up to the Himalayas in the North, and might have included Nepal where is situated Varāhakṣetra, which has been identified with Kokāmukhasvāmī tīrtha. His successors Narasiṃhagupta, Vainyagupta, Kumāragupta III, Bhānugupta and others proved weaklings and the history of the Gupta empire virtually closed with the death of Budhagupta. The Imperial line finally collapsed in 554 A.D. For about a century we know nothing about the history of this family. It is sometime 530 A.D. that Yaśodharman appears as a meteor in the political horizon and sets a big empire. After the struggle amongst the Hūṇas, Gauḍas, later Guptas and Maukharīs for supremacy in the north, the later Guptas, no doubt, tried to revive their last glories. Jīvitagupta is described as Kṣitīśa Cūḍāmaṇi, i.e., the overlord of the Earth. Probably he succeeded in rehabilitating the power and prestige of his family in the territories lying between the Himalayas and the sea, through several campaigns. His son, Kumāragupta, it seems, had assumed an independent status. On the basis of archaeological evidences, it is said that Tirhut was under the direct control of Maukharīs, over which the Gupta acted only as Chieftains or rulers under their Maukharī overlords.

With the rise of the Vardhana family towards the end of the 6th century A.D. at Thāneśvara, the centre of political gravity shifted from Magadha to Kanauj. Harṣavardhana

was the most powerful King of this dynasty. He ascended the throne of Thāneśvara and launched a vigorous military campaign. Defeated and humiliated Śaśāṅka had to eschew his ambition to become the master of Northern India, including Mithilā. Mādhavagupta's son, Ādityasena, a feudatory of Harṣa in Magadha shook off his allegiance to the Imperial power and revived the grandeur and glory of Magadha for a time. He seems to have fully exploited the confusion that followed the usurpation of Harṣa's throne by Arjuna, his minister in Tirhut and latter's conflict with the combined Tibetan and Nepalese forces as told in the Chinese records. Just after the emperor's death, Arjuna or Aruṇāśva insulted and injured the second Chinese mission of Wang-hiuen-tse. The latter fled to Nepal overnight and returned with a large army consisting of 1200 picked Tibetan soldiers supplied by the famous Tibetan King Srong-btsan-gampo and supported by a Nepalese contingent of 7000 horsemen sent by the Nepalese King. The combined army stormed Tirhut only after a seize of three days and massacred its people. Arjuna fled, revolted and was again defeated and carried a prisoner to China by Chinese envoy.

The Maukharīs and the Later Gupta felt the need of being cautious against this new danger. The alliance between the Maukharīs of Kanauj, the Later Guptas of Magadha and the Licchavis of Nepal was possibly directed against the rising power of Tibet and that prevented the expansion of the hill state into the interior of India. Some historians believe that the Tibetan authority continued in Tirhut until 703 A.D.

According to Tārānātha the Candra dynasty ruled in Mithilā before the rise of the Pālas, though no other definite data about their rule is known to us. The anarchical condition of Mithilā facilitated the rise of the Pālas. Gopāla was made King by the people to put an end to a lawless state of thing in which everyone was prey of his neighbours.

Dharmapāla was the founder of the greatness of this line. During the period of the Pālas and the Senas, Mithilā was regarded as the fifth division of Bengal.

According to Tārānātha, Dharmapāla subjugated Kāmarūpa, Tirhut, Gauḍa and other countries. He was succeeded by Devapāla. Devapāla is said to have ruled over the whole of northern India. According to the Bhagalpur grant of Nārāyaṇapāla, which was issued when the King was staying at Mudgagiri, records the grant of a village Makuṭikā to the temple of Śiva at Kalspota, situated in the Kakṣa Viṣaya of Tīrabhukti. The record is an indelible proof of the fact that Nārāyaṇapāla held sway over Tīrabhukti till the seventeenth year of his reign. He boasts of having build one thousand temples of Śiva in the said locality. In the later part of his reign Magadha, Varendra and possibly East Bengal passed into the hands of Pratīhāra Mahendrapāla. Bhoja was succeeded by Mahendrapāla, the Pratīhāra King. During the reign of Rājyapāla the Gurjaras crossed the Sona and over-ran Tirhut.

Yaśovarman defeated the Pratīhāra emperor and launched a scheme of Digvijaya. He invaded the territories of the Pālas. Verse 23 of the Khajuraho inscription contains the only reference to Mithilā in Candella records. Mahīpāla I revived the glory of the Pālas. He was ruling over Tirhut and Banaras in 1026 A.D. while the political power of the Pāla was on the wane, Cālukya invasions under Vikramāditya took place in the reign of Vigrahapāla III. He seems too have strengthened his position in Tirhut. Mithilā remained a part of the Pālas empire till the rise of Nānyadeva.

According to Professor Thakur since the breakup of the Videhana monarchy and the Vajjian Confederacy the history of Mithilā has been a history of continuous defeats and subjugation. The light that shone eternally had been eclipsed by the enveloping darkness. Politically dormant and culturally stagnant She lay prostrate and helpless. It

was therefore, after a long spell nearly fourteen hundred years of trials and tribulations that the rose again under the brave and inspiring leadership of Karṇāṭa Nānyadeva and asserted her independence. Nānyadeva was the founder of the Karṇāṭa dynasty or Simraon dynasty (1097 A.D.). At the beginning of his political career, Nānya seems to have been an ordinary feudatory chief and that is evident from his own commentary on Bharata's Naṭyaśāstra. Here we have to take note of the fact that in the, Andharatharhi Inscription of his minister, Śrīdharadāsa, he is again called Śrīman Nānyapati.

Mahāsāmantādhipati is indicative of the fact that he was a feudatory chief before he assumed the royal power in Mithilā. Whether he was a Sāmanta under the Cālukya rulers or under the Pālas is very difficult to say in the present state of our knowledge. Nānya is described as having defeated the heroes of Sauvīra and Mālava. He, after having successfully settled in Mithilā turned his attention towards Gauḍa and Vaṅga. In Gauḍa, Nānya probably came into conflict with Kumārapāla and in Vaṅga with the Yādava ruler Harivarman. He came into conflict with Vijayasena either before or after his victory over Rāmapāla. He established his Kingdom in Mithilā by coming into conflict with Rāmapāla and Mithilā independent. Mithilā and Nepal have been intimately connected since time immemorial. Mithilā lay on the route to Nepal. He not only conquered and created a state but also consolidated it and left a good heritage for his successors. Besides being a good administrated, he was himself one of the greatest scholars of the time. He wrote his famous commentary on Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra, which came to be regarded as the most standard work on the subject. It was under the able leadership of Nānyadeva that Mithilā once again came to the forefront of Indian history both in the area of politics and culture after a long gap.

Nānyadeva had two sons Malladeva and Gaṅgadeva. We consider Malladeva to be a forgotten King of Mithilā. On

the basis of the Bhit-Bhagwanpur inscription, which reads *"oṃ śrī Malladevasya..."*, it has been suggested that Bhit-Bhagvanpur was the capital of Malladeva. Tradition asserts that one of Nānya's sons ruled in Nepal. It seems that Gaṅgadeva ruled in Mithilā while the other, who is none else than Malladeva, ruled in Nepal. He was not on good terms with his brother, Gaṅgadeva. From Pratāpamalla's inscription of Nepal we learn that Gaṅgadeva succeeded Nānyadeva in 1147. He was a very brave king Gaṅgadeva claimed some political authority in Gauḍa. Malladeva was ruling over the Terai area and the eastern position of Tirhut while Gaṅgadeva was ruling in Tirhut. The Andharatharhi inscription also mentions Gaṅgadeva but there is nothing positive to throw light on his reign. Śrīdharadāsa seems to have continued a minister under Gaṅgadeva. Unlike his father, Gaṅgadeva's reign was comparatively peaceful. He is said to have introduced the system of Parganas or fiscal divisions for the purpose of revenue administration. For the collection of revenue, a Choudhary or Headman was appointed for each Pargana. For the settlement of all types of dispute, he created Pañcāyata on the basis of election. He got dug many tanks and erected a large number of temples. According to a tradition, he built a strong fort at Andharatharhi. It has been pointed out by Mulla Taquia that Gaṅgadeva shifted his Capital to Darbhanga. In fact, Simaraongarh continued to be the main capital but several other town were converted in to temporary capitals and Darbhanga was one of them.

Narsiṃhadeva succeeded his father Gaṅgadeva in 1188 A.D. We get some informations about Narasiṃhadeva from Vidyāpati's Puruṣaparīkṣā. In tale 4, we are told that Delhi Sultan in his march against the enemy was helped by the two young Princes- Narasiṃhadeva of Karṇāṭa race and Cacikadeva Cauhāna. Grierson identified this Sultan with Mohammad bin Tughluq and he admits that Narasiṃhadeva was the grandson of Nānya. Rāma siṃha

Deva, who succeeded his father on the throne, was a pious devotee and a firm patron of sacred literature. Under his auspices several well-known commentaries on the Vedas were compiled rules were framed for the guidance of Hindus in their religious and social observances, and an officer was appointed in each village to adjudicate upon all questions arising from the working of these new canons of conduct. Rāma Siṃha Deva seems to have been a liberal patron of learning. His officer Śrikara Ācārya wrote the Vyākhyā-amṛta a commentary on the lexicon Amarakoṣa. On the death of Rāma Siṃha Deva, his son Śaktisiṃha ascended the throne, who was a cruel despot. He never cared for the welfare of his people. One of his ministers probably Caṇḍeśvara Ṭhākura established a council of seven elders to serve as a check on the autocratic powers of the King. An outstanding scholar, Caṇḍeśvara was a veteran politician of the age. The last days of Śaktisiṃha Deva were not happy. His son Harisiṃha Deva was the last but in popular steem, the greatest of the line. He was greater in many respects than Nānyadeva. It was this King, it is believed, who grouped the Maithila Brāhmaṇas into the three main divisions of Śrotriya, Yogya and Jayavāra, made a classification of the sub-casts according to mūlas and ḍīhas, introduced the other matrimonial arrangements prevailing to this day, and established the order of Pañjīkāra or genealogists, who keep in fact the purity of the Brāhmaṇa blood; the latter measure is said to have been taken by him in consequence of one of his ministers having married, in ignorance, a lady within, the prohibited degrees of relationship.

According to Canda Jha, Harisiṃha was born in 1294 AD. He was fortunate in having some of the wittiest and most shrewd ministers like Devāditya Ṭhākura, his minister for peace and war, his son Vīreśvara Ṭhākura and the latter's son Mahāmāttaya Caṇḍeśvara Ṭhākura, minister for war and peace.

Harisiṃha Deva was also a great patron of learning. Caṇḍeśvara was the author of the Kṛtyaratnākara, Vivādaratnākara, Dānaratnākara, Gṛhastharatnākara and Śuddhiratnākara. In 1323 the Emperor Gyasuddin Tughlaq led his Victorious forces into Tirhut on his march back from the defeat of Bahadur Shah, the rebellious Governor of Bengal, and proceeded to reduce this outlying portion of the empire and appointed Ahmad Khan as Governer. Hari Siṃha fell back on the capital, Simraon, but this was soon taken and reduced to ruins. He fled from Tirhut, invaded Nepal and settled down there for the rest of his life. Thus, after a rule of two centuries and quarter over Mithilā, and a direct rule of about a century over the Nepal valley, the celebrated Karṇāṭa dynasty made its tragic exit from the political stage of Northern India. The rule of this dynasty, however, left its indelible marks on the sands of the time, so far as the Sanskrit learning is concerned. Smṛtic studies were renewed and considerably developed by Caṇḍeśvara and his family. Some of the most popular works were written during this period. The Karṇāṭa iconography is an important part of Indian art history. The Varṇaratnākara, first Maithili prose, was written by Jyotirīśvara in the Karṇāṭa period.

With the fall of the Karṇāṭas of Mithilā the Muslim conquest of the whole of North Bihar was complete. Kāmeśvara Ṭhākura was the founder of Oinavāra or Sugāon dynasty (1353 AD). He was set in his place as a ruler of Mithilā by the Delhi Emperor Gyasuddin Tughlak. Vardhamāna has mentioned him in his Gaṅgā-kṛtya-viveka. It appeals that he was a Brāhmaṇa and Rāja-paṇḍita, as mentioned by Vidyāpati in his Dānavākyāvalī. Kāmeśvara was succeeded by his son Bhogīśvara, who has been mentioned as a ruler in some of Vidyāpati's songs. It is said that Kāmeśvara was deposed in favour of his son Bhogīśvara by Firoz shah Tughlak. Bhogīśvara is traditionally said to have been succeeded

by his son Gaṇeśvara. Vīrasiṃhadeva followed Gaṇeśvara. He was followed by his brother Kīrtisiṃhadeva. Vīrasiṃha and Kīrtisiṃha were sons of Gaṇeśvara. Kīirtisiṃha has been praised by Vidyāpati in his Kīrtilatā. The younger son of Kāmeśvara named Bhavasiṃha or Bhaveśa succeeded Kīrtisiṃha. According to Vidyāpati's *Puruṣa-parīkṣā*, Bhavasiṃha Deva gave up his body before Lord Śiva on the bank of the river Bagmati. He was succeeded by his son Deva Siṃha whose viruda was Garuḍa Nārāyaṇa. He patronized the Paṇḍitas. By his order Vidyāpati wrote the Bhū-parikramaṇaṃ describing the travel of Baladeva from the Naimiṣa forest to Janakadeśa (Mithilā) in the course of which he was told eight moral tales, with this King's consent. He is said to have removed his capital to a place called Devakulī which he named after himself.

Deva Siṃha was succeeded by his son Śiva Siṃha who has been highly prised by Vidyāpati in his *Puruṣa-parīkṣā*. Vidyāpati has praised him and his queen Lakhimādevī in a very large number of his songs. He is said to have built his capital at Śivasiṃhapura or Gajarathapura. Śivasiṃha was the most famous King of the line. The *Puruṣa-parīkṣā* says that Śivasiṃha earned great fame by fighting against the forces of the Kings of Gauḍa and Gajjan. It is not known who was this ruler of Gajjan but perhaps he was some Muhammadan ruler near Tirhut. Śivasiṃha appears also to have struck gold coins in his name and it is probable that he succeeded in making Mithilā absolutely independent. Śivamiṃha's chief claim to fame rests on his patronage of learning. Not only was his wife Lakhimā one of the few learned women of India, but his court was frequented by poets and scholar, eg., Vidyāpati, Vācaspati Miśra and Misarū Miśra. Lakhimā the chief queen of Śivasiṃha, ascended the throne after the tragic end of her husband (1416 AD). Local traditions assert that Lakhimā ruled for a period of 12 years (1416–1428). Padma Siṃha, younger brother of Śivasiṃha

succeeded her and has been mentioned by Vidyāpati in *Śaiva-Sarvasvasāra*. He died childless (C.1430–31 AD). He was followed by his wife Visvāsa Devī on the throne. She is said to have ruled for about 12 years. Which the date (1453 AD of the Kandaha Inscription) of Narasiṃhadeva, who ruled after Harisiṃhadeva the successor of Visvāsa Devī, also seems to suggest. Visvāsa Devī was yet another celebrated lady of the time. Under her kind patronage Vidyāpati wrote the *Śaiva- Sarvasvasāra*, *Pramāṇabhūta-Purāṇa saṃgraha* and *Gaṅgā Vākyāvalī*. Her patronage of Sanskrit learning is Unique. It is said that she was the patron of 1400 mīmāṃsakas. She died childless and the elder branch Virtually disappeared with her death. Harisiṃhadeva, who was youger son of Bhavasiṃha and a younger brother of Devasiṃha, succeeded Visvāsa Devī. He has been mentioned by Vidyāpati in his *Vibhāgasāra* and *Kṛtya-mahārṇava* of Vācaspati Miśra. He must be distinguished from his name-sake of the Karṇāṭa dynasty.

Harisiṃhadeva was succeeded by his son Narasiṃhadeva. Vidyāpati says in his *Durgābhakti-taraṅgiṇī* that he was a great warrior, a great giver of gift and an erudite scholar. He had two wives. Dhīramati, a celebrated lady the day by whose order Vidyāpati wrote the *Dānavākyāvalī*, and Hīrā mother of Candrasiṃha mentioned in Misarū Miśra's *Vivāda-candra*. Narasiṃha's eldest son, Dhīrasiṃha, succeeded him. Like his father his name also finds mention in several contemporary works of celebrated writers.

Bhairavasiṃha was the younger brother and successor of Dhīrasiṃha who had a son named Rāghavendra. He patronized the Sanskrit learning. During the rule of Dhīrasiṃha, Bhairava had by his valour already subjugated the lord of Pañca Gauḍa. He dug hundreds of ponds, gave away towns and pattanas (hamlets) as gift and performed the Tulāpuruṣa gift ceremony. He was succeeded by his son Rāmabhadradeva, who assumed the

viruda of Rūpanārāyaṇa. Rāmabhadra followed in the footsteps of his father in encouraging the study of Sanskrit. He was succeeded by Lakṣmīnāthadeva who adopted the viruda of Kaṃsanārāyaṇa. He was ruling at least in 1510 A.D. He evidently came into collision with the powerful Sultan Sikander Lodi of Delhi. He was the last King with whom the dynasty ended.

According to Professor Upendra Ṭhākura, Mithilā tradition asserts that one Maithila Kāyastha Keśava Majumadāra, one Majlis khan and a few others were the immediate successors of the Oinavāras and they paid tribute to Babar, the founder of the Mughal empire in India. They were probably petty zamindaras who flourished on the ruins of the Oinavāras.

Thus, in chapter VII and VIII of second edition of the *History of Mithilā* Professor Thakura has dwelt at length on the establishment and achievements of the Karṇāṭa dynasty which reinstated Mithilā on the map of Independent states. He has also dealt with the age of the Oinavāra Brāhmaṇa Kings who ruled over Mithilā, after the fall of the Karṇāṭa dynasty, though politically they were to a great extent subjugated to the Muslim Emperors of Delhi.

In Part II of the second edition he has discussed the various cultural aspects of the people in ancient and medieval Mithilā. Besides Polity, Society, History of the Pañjī system, Economy, Religion and Philosophy, education and literature, art and architecture, he has taken notice of the outstanding social reforms introduced by Harisiṃhadeva, the last King of the Karṇāṭa line, and the evils accruing there from. He has criticised them frankly and sincerely, of which he, as a child of the soil, can claim to have the first-hand knowledge.

About the Maithili language and literature, Professor Thakur says Maithili seems to have taken a concrete shape during tenth and eleventh centuries AD and has passed through various stages of development known as old or

early, middle or modern. He says the form of old Maithili is traced to the caryā songs and to Avahaṭṭa composition which continued up to the days of Vidyāpati. Scholars generally agree that the old Maithili literature covers the period from 900 to 1350 AD., the middle Maithili from 1350 to 1830 AD., and the modern Maithili from 1830 onwards. Thus, Professor Thakur's History of Mithilā, besides other writings on Mithilā itself, proved to be a trend setter which not only presented a comprehensive political history of Mithilā for the first time in scientific historical methodology but also provided an elaborate cultural history of the region which Mithilā is so proud of.

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Studies in Jainism and Buddhism in Mithilā

The second important work of Professor Upendra Thakur was *Studies in Jainism and Buddhism in Mithilā*, Published by the Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series office, Varanasi in 1964. Professor Upendra Thakur was well known to Indoligists for his History of Mithilā. In his present work *Studies in Jainism and Buddhism in Mithilā* he acquaints us with the religion and philosophy in ancient and medieval Mithilā. The first two chapters of this monograph under review deal with Śaivism, Śāktism, Vaiṣṇavism, Tāntricism and the Sun cult and different aspects of the Brahmanical philosophy. All of the above-mentioned religions were almost equally popular in Mithilā. The ancient and Medieval people of Mithilā had no hesitation to accept the way of life indicated in the Smṛtis and Tantras, which were not complimentary to one another. It was because of this catholic outlook that Vidyāpati and his ancestors and contemporaries, though staunch Smārtas were at the same times were well versed in the Tantras. Similarly, one acquainted with the Pūrvamīmāṃsā and the Vedānta, did not hesitate to read intensively other schools of philosophy. The notable contributions of Udayana and Vācaspati Miśra did not stifle the development of a new philosophical outlook by Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya and his son Varddhamāna. Mīmāṃsā was supplanted by the Navyanyāya school of philosophy from the thirteenth century.

Ancient and medieval Maithilas welcomed discussions, freedom in speech and thought. So, some of them became Jainas and Buddhists. The history of these two

non-brahmanical religions has been surveyed in the last three chapters, entitled, the rise and growth of Jainism, rise and growth of Buddhism, the last phase. Professor Thakur thinks that the principal cause of the popularity of these two religions till about 600 A.D. were the patronage of some Kings like Nami of Videha, Cetaka of Vaiśālī, some princes of the then republican tribes, Aśoka and Pāla, Kings and a rival schools of philosophy. A comparative study of the roles of Buddhism and Jainism shows that the former was more popular then the latter while most of the Jaina antiquities are confined to the Vaiśālī area, architectural remains of the Buddhists are found not only in Vaiśālī, but also at several other places in Champarana, Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Munger, Purnea and Saharsa districts. Another testimony to the popularity of Buddhism in Mithilā is the repeated afforts of Hindu philosophers to assail Buddhist logic and philosophy. Eminent scholars like Udyotakara, Vācaspati Miśra, Udayana have denounced Buddhist logic. How far they succeeded is a matter of speculation. Yet it must be admitted that down to the fourteenth century the followers of the Brahmanical religion never spared an opportunity to criticise and refute the Buddhists.

This book is divided into five chapters. First of all, Professor Thakur has given an idea of the historical and geographical position of Mithilā, its foundation and different interpretations its mythical names, description of its people and the cultural achievements and the various sources from which information relating to the cultural heritage of Mithilā has been gleaned. Professor Thakur says Mithilā is the land of the people who have carried conservatism to the excess of uncouthness. It is a country with an ancient history, traditions of which it remains to the present day. It is a land under the domination of a sect of Brāhmaṇas, extraordinarily devoted to the mint, anise and cummin of the law. For centuries it has been a tract too proud to admit other nationalities to intercourse on equal

terms. For centuries, it has passed through conquest after conquest from the north, from the east and from the west without changing its ancestral peculiarities.

The age old geographical isolation has no doubt profoundly influenced the character of the people. Even when the lands to the west of the river Gaṇḍaka and south of the Gaṅgā were constantly subjected to turbulent influence that naturally accompanied the invasions of the muslim invaders and the subsequent establishment of the Muslim rule for a pretty long time, Mithilā, to the north of the Gaṅgā, remained more or less at peace under Hindu Kings of the Karṇāṭa and Oinavāra dynasties. Of the principal castes inhabiting the land for centuries mention may be made of the Brāhmaṇas, Rājapūtas, Bābhanas or Bhūmihāras, Goālas or Ahīras, Dusādhas, Dhānukas, Koirīs, Mallāhas, Camāras, Keoṭas, Khataves, Kurmīs, Musaharas, Tāntīs, and Telīs- all Hindus. Among the Muhammdanas, Sheikhs, Jolāhas, Dhuniās, and Kunjarās are well represented. Moreover, there are many other small castes that do not merit much attention.

From the earliest down to the modern days history of Mithilā had a unique and distinct position in the Body Politics of Āryāvarta. It was ruled over by a galaxy of philosopher Kings. Long before the advent of the Buddha and also during his life time, the eight clans including the great Videhas and Licchavis inhabiting this land, formed the confederation of the Vṛjis and established the famous republic of the Vṛjis or the Licchavis, probably oldest republic in the history of the world. With the fall of the mighty Licchavis, Ajātaśatru occupied Vaiśālī and became the master of Mithilā. Thus, Mithilā formed a part of the Magadhan empire but it still retained its distinctive features. The Mauryas and the Guptas honoured its age old democratic traditions. The historical matrimonial alliance between the Guptas and the Licchavis was largely responsible for the rise and eminence of the Guptas. Mithilā after

Harṣa's death, came to be ruled over and ravaged by the Tibetans, the later Gupta, the Maukharīs, the Pālas, the Gurjara Pratīhāras, the Raṣṭrakūṭas and the Candelas in succession till the advent of the Karṇāṭa King Nānyadeva, the founder of the celebrated Simaraun dynasty (1097 AD). In 1324 AD. it came under Muhammadan rule. A little later (c.1354 AD.) Emperor Feroz Shah Tughlak handed over the Raj of Tirhut to Kāmeśvara Ṭhākura, a Maithila Śrotriya Brāhmaṇa who founded a new dynasty known as Oinavāra dynasty. Mithilā was ruled over by the native Brāhmaṇa Kings of this dynasty for two centuries. After the fall of this dynasty, Akbar, the great, it is said bestowed the Raj of Tirhut (c. 1556 AD) on the Brāhmaṇa scholar, Mm. Maheśa Ṭhākura, the founder of the Khaṇḍavalā dynasty or the Darbhanga Raj of which the late Mahārājādhirāja Sir Kāmeśvara Simha was the last Scion in whom vested the cultural and social leadership of Mithilā.

Professor Thakur says, though the end of the Karṇāṭas and the Oinavāras was tragic, their period made brilliant contributions in the spheres of art and literature. In this respect, the Mithilā of the Karṇāṭas and the Oinavāras resembled very much that of the Janakas and Yājñavalkya. A great centre of learning from the very beginning of its history, Mithilā stands apart pre-eminently as the land given to intellectual pursuits and consequently to speculations about the spiritual well-being of man. It is the celebrated land of the Upaniṣads which embody the highest truths ever found out by man about life, soul and hereafter, and record the great impetus given to those speculations by Janaka, the philosopher King of Mithilā. It is the land of the disinterested Videhas where the great Brahmavidyā, the essence of Vedānta and the Kernel round which Hindu culture has grown and developed, was perfected. The Upaniṣad, indeed expound a new religion which was opposed to the sacrificial ceremonial. It represents the philosophical

aspect of Hinduism and aims at the deliverance from mundane existence by the absorption of the individual into soul through correct Knowledge.

The Śatapatha period was still the golden days of the Āryans. It referred to worship and adore and gave only a sub-ordinate place to rigidness and privations. But the Upaniṣadic age is remarkable in as much as it witnessed revolutionary changes in the religious outlook of the people, which was in the following centuries responsible for the rise and growth of two new heretical sects Jainism and Buddhism.

According to Professor Thakur the people of Mithilā were strong believers in Varṇāśrama-dharma and simple devotion to Hindu gods and deities. The three main figures who have inspired and animated their souls though the ages, are Śiva, Śakti and Viṣṇu. The worship of Śiva was, however, most wide spread among the men women folks. The literary sources apart, archaeological finds also speak of the great popularity and veneration in which Lord Śiva was held in Mithilā. The worship of Śakti was no less popular. She was supposed to give siddhis only but Lord Śiva could award mukti or salvation. Some of Mithilā's greatest saints and upāsakas have been associated with Śakti for instance Devāditya, Varddhmāna, Madana Upādhyāya and a host of Tāntrikas. The very first verse taught to a child was in praise of Śakti, i.e. this popularity of Aripana or the painted yantras on the ground. Moreover, the Śābara rites of Mithilā's women, the sensuous character of the people; pāga or their Tantric headdress, the wide spread worship of earthen image of Durgā, the Mātṛkā pūjā and the prevalence of dīkṣā etc. strongly point to the great importance and in effaceable impact of Śakti in Maithila religious life. Vaiṣṇavism seems to have been a prominent feature much earlier and specially in the Pāla period. The discovery of a large number of Viṣṇu images from Mithilā bears testimony to the fact. Besides these three important

cults, worship of the sun cult also seems to have been popular as is clear from the Bhavāditya temple inscription of Narasiṃhadeva of the Oinavāra dynasty in Kandaha. The discovery of a large number of Sun images from Mithilā bears testimony to the fact.

Professor Thakur says, in the realm of knowledge Mithilā's achievement and contributions have been so prolific, so very profound, and so far reaching that they have no parallel. All branches of knowledge have been cultivated here and enriched. Its contribution to philosophy of which India is justly proud are however, superb. Nyāya was first systematised by Gautama and in the twelfth century Gaṅgeśa gave it a new orientation. In the history of Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā, Udyotakara, Maṇḍana, Prabhākara, Vācaspati, Pārthasārathī Miśra, Udayanācārya, Murāri Miśra, Gaṅgeśa, Pakṣadhara, Bhavanātha and Śaṅkara are some of the illustrious names. Intermingled with religion is philosophy which is looked upon as the natural outcome of religion. Whether religion leads to philosophy or philosophy to religions in India the two are inseparable. Upaniṣad or the Vedānta philosophy is the logical outcome of the Sāṃkhya and pushes its conclusion yet further. Its exponent was Kapila, the father of all psychologists. The general spirit underlying the Upaniṣad may be described as the search for truth in life. The doctrine that self is yet essentially unknowable through the ordinary venues of knowledge is as old as the Upaniṣads. The puzzle was first started by Yājñavalkya, the great Maithila philosopher of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad in his famous dialogues with Maitreyī, his wife and Gārgī. In the history of the great thinkers of the Upaniṣadic period with their distinctive contributions the following names stand out Mahidāsa Aitereya, Raikva, Śaṇḍilya, Satyakāma-jābāla, Jābāli, Uddālaka, Śvetaketu, Bhāradvāja, Gārgyāyana, Pratardana, Bālāki, Ajātaśatru, Varuṇa, Yājñavalkya, Gārgī, Maitreyī, Janaka-vaideha (Kīrti Janaka), Śaibya

Satyakāma, Kauśalya Āśvalāyana, Bhārgava Vaidarbhī and Kabandhī Kātyāyana.

In this work, Professor Thakur has described some of the great philosophers of Mithilā. The name of Yājñavalkya the first reputed author of the white Yajurveda, a prominent authority on the rituals in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, and on philosophy of Brahma and Ātman first propounded in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad is one of the most illustrious among Vedic sages. We have numerous references to this promulgator of the white Yajurveda in our ancient literature.

Professor Thakur says the land of Mithilā proved to be the most fertile soil for the two systems of philosophy Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā to thrive on. From Gautama to Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya is a fascinating story of the tremendous growth and development of these systems of philosophy which germinated and blossomed forth into an ever expanding quest for knowledge, truth and ultimate reality touching all problems of human mind. Besides Nyāya the philosophy of Mīmāṃsā found its there great exponents in Kumārila, Prabhākara and Murāri, culminating in three different schools. Kumārila was the vigorous exponent of the Brahmanical orthodoxy which assumes the authoritativeness of the Vedas and the supremacy of the priest. It was in the age of Kumārila that Buddhism had spread its influence far and wide. His writings are brilliant and his criticisms of opponents views quits convincing. After Kumārila Maṇḍana is undisputedly a celebrated name both in the field of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. According to a tradition current in Mithilā he was a Maithila Brāhmaṇa and lived in the village of Māhiṣmatī (modern Mahishi) in the district of Saharasa. From the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* we further learn that he was husband of Kumārila's sister. According to some he was also a disciple of Kumārila. In other words, Kumārila, Maṇḍana and Śaṅkara were contemporaries. A classmate of Maṇḍana Miśra and a great

disciple of a great teacher Kumārila, Prabhākara Miśra was one of the most intelligent and independent interpreters of the *Śābarabhāṣya*. He was a propounder of a new school of Mīmāṃsā, the Prabhākara School.

A master of all the six systems of philosophy, Vācaspati Miśra was popularly known as Ṣaḍ-darśana-vallabha or Sarvatantrasvatantra and Dvādaśa darśana-ṭīkākāra in the world of intellect. He is said to have belonged to village Ṭhāḍhī in the district of Madhubani. The great Vācaspati Miśra is a name to conjure with in the field of Indian philosophy. He wrote a sub commentary on *Nyāya Vārttika* of Udyotakara, elaborated its conceptions and defended them against heterodox and Buddhist criticisms. After Kumārila and Prabhākara, Pārthasārathi Miśra is another celebrated name in the field of Mīmāṃasā Literature, who was as faithfully devoted to Kumārila as Śalikanātha was a faithful interpreter of the views of Prabhākara. He was well-versed in both the schools, was an inhabitant of Mithilā and learnt the Śāstra from his father, Yajñātman who was a great scholar of his time.

On the basis of the literary and traditional sources, Professor Thakur says Udayana or Udayanācārya, was yet another great thinker who was a militant champion of the Brahmanic faith, and bitterly criticised and mercilessly attacked the Buddhists on all fronts. He is one of the most shining stars on the firmament of Nyāya philosophy. He was born in village Kariyan which is situated about 12 miles south-east of Darbhanga. He was the celebrated author of several works some of which rank the highest in the field of Nyāya literature. After Pārthasārathi Miśra and before the rise of Murāri Miśra (II) the advocate of Miśramata in Mīmāṃsā, the scene was dominated by a great many Mīmāṃsakas including Bhavanātha Miśra, the author of *Nayaviveka* regarded as a masterpiece by scholars. He was the propounder of the third school in Mīmāṃsā and flourished sometime between the 11th and

12th centuries A.D. Besides Mīmāṃsā a new school of Nyāya philosophy, known as Navya Nyāya was started in Mithilā during the period under review, the credit for which goes to Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya. It was a distinct and marvellous contribution to the Indian system of thought which dominated the philosophical scene for centuries. Mithilā during this period was a celebrated seat of learning and scholars from different parts of the country came to receive the highest training in logic and other branches of learning in the reputed University of Mithilā. Gaṅgeśa belonged to Mangarauni, a village in the District of Madhubani. It is said, he had established his reputed academy at the village Kariyana (Samastipur, District), the birth place of the great Udayana who was also one of his predecessors in the field. His son Varddhmāna is the author of some of the famous Vaiśeṣika commentaries. He is perhaps the oldest commentator on Udayana's works and on Śrīharṣa's Vedantic work. He flourished in the first half of the thirteenth century and was an illustrious pupil of his illustrious father –preceptor.

In the next chapter of his work Professor Thakur has tried to present a full picture of the rise and growth of Jainism in Mithilā. He says that as in the history of Buddhism, so in the history of Jainism, Mithilā played a very significant part for centuries. Mahāvīra, the twenty-fourth tīrthaṅkara of the Jainas, and commonly spoken of as "the founder of the Jaina church", was a scion of the noble family of Vaiśālī where he was born and spent the early part of his life. The importance of Vaiśālī does not lie only in its being the capital seat of a strong and well-organised republic but also in its being a very great centre of the currents and cross currents of various religious thoughts and philosophies. Vardhamāna Mahavīra, one of the great leader of Jainism, was born at Kuṇḍagrāma, and belonged to the Jñātṛka clan. He, therefore, came to be known as a *vesālie* or Vaiśālika meaning a native of Vaiśālī,

or the first citizen of Vaiśālī. His father, Siddhārtha was the chief of the Naya or Jñātṛka clan whose wife Triśalā was sister of Cetaka, King of Vaiśālī. She is called Vaidehī, or Videhadattā, because she belonged to the ruling family of Videha, and hence Mahāvīra is also known by various maternal names such a Videha, Videhadattā, Videhajātya and Videha-sukumāra. He was born of Triśalā in 561 B.C. He was married to Yaśodā, the daughter of Samantavīra, of village Basantapura. He attained Divine Light at the age of 42 at the village Ambika on the bank of the river Rajupalika.

According to Professor Upendra Thakur, Mithilā or Videha, therefore, has a much greater claim on Mahāvīra whose personality and teaching rapidly built up Vaiśālī as a centre of Jainism and of the spiritual discipline and asceticism upon which it was based. Besides Mahāvīra Basupūjya, the twelfth Tīrthaṅkara is said to have attained his *nirvāṇa* at Campāpura and Naminātha, the twenty-first Tīrthaṅkara was also born in Mithilā. Mahāvīra himself is said to have spent twelve rainy seasons in Vaiśālī and six rainy seasons in Mithilā.

Professor Thakur has also tried to present a full picture of the rise and growth of Buddhism in Mithilā. He says Vaiśālī was the first to become the stronghold of both Buddhism and Jainism. The Buddha loved Vaiśālī and the Licchavis so much that he paid at least three visits to the city. The Vajjis sought his help on many occasions for the solution of their problems. Mithilā was a well-marked natural region which is referred to in the Buddhist and Jaina texts. Videha or Mithilā is often used in a wider sense to include Vaiśālī also.

On the basis of Buddhist sources, Professor Thakur says that many Videhan Kings turned ascetics. We have mention of a Videhan King, Janaka Janadeva who is said to have given up his hundred teacher and followed Pañcaśikha the first disciple of Āśuri. The Nimi Jātaka

says that a certain King, Makhādeva ruled over Mithilā and renounced the world at the later stage of his life. After him came Nimi who was "born to round of" the family "Like a hoop of a chariot wheel". His son was Karāla or Kalāra Janaka who also renounced the word and brought this family to an end. There was another King, Sādhīna whose virtues and goodness were praised by all. Infact, an all –round attempt was made to re-interpret the word Brāhmaṇa in a spiritual manner and besides the lower castes, many Brāhmaṇas joined the new order.

According to Professor Thakur, there is no doubt that the first popular wave of Buddhism shook the entire country out of its bottom, and that the spread of the new order passed more or less unchallenged as an accomplished fact. But when the followers of Buddhism began to attack the ancient Vedic traditions right and left with their arguments borne out of jealousy and hatred, the Maithila scholars shook off their complacency, essayed and rein forced the tottering edifices by taking up the new challenge in its letter and spirit. The age of Kumārila and Saṅkarācārya was the age of great religious ferment and Brahmanic revival, for they are supposed to have been avowed apponents of Buddhism and Saṅkara's commentaries and studies or Vedantism of great originality. Vigour and philosophic insight, which was further championed by Maṇḍana Miśra of Mithilā, who strongly denounced the Buddhists. Udayana was a militant champion of the Brahmanic faith, and he bitterly criticised and mercilessly attacked the Buddhists on all fronts.

Professor Thakur says that in the 14th century the Maithila Brāhmaṇas treated the Buddhists, and not the Muslims, as their worst enemies, even two hundred years after the destruction of Nalanda and other Buddhist centres of learning. Jyotirīśvara introduced them as degraded and dangerous and applauded Udayana's stand against them as pleasant and commendable. Contrary

to the literary accounts, archaeological remains, found in different parts of Mithilā, have altogether a different tale to tell. Although no large-scale excavations have been undertaken in this part of the country except the Vaiśālī or Basarh excavations, yet the stray finds and the scattered remains of the numerous images of the Buddha and beautiful fragments of Buddhist art and other Buddhist objects of antiquarian interest throw considerable light on the popularity of Buddhism even in this most orthodox part of the country.

In the present work, Professor Thakur has described some of the famous Buddhist sites, stūpas and a number of the Buddhist images discovered from Mithilā. From his survey it is clear beyond doubt that inspite of the wordy duel, sometimes culminating in bloodshed, Brahmanism and Buddhism flourished side by side in Mithilā, though in the course of a few centuries the latter lost its hold on the soil.

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Madhubani Painting

His book on 'Madhubani Painting' based on the folk traditions of Mithilā is a monumental work which was published by Abhinava Publications, New Delhi in 1982. This work of Professor Thakur contains a brief study of the various facets of Mithilā folkarts and paintings which are unique in character having few parallels. Madhubani painting while aspiring towards the high ideals of life covered a larger field. Apart from its delineation of religious ideas, it reflects the belief and customs of the common people, thus producing an artistic folklore of unusual interest. As in the case of Rajput painting, its chief aim was to present the innumerably graphic aspects of religion to the people, literally for household use. This resulted in a miniature Mithilā school, what is now popularly known as Madhubani painting, which is an outstanding feature of the pictorial art of India. Although this volume cannot be regarded as an exhaustive study, nonetheless, it presents for the first time an interesting outline which researchers in the field can make use of with great profit.

According to Professor Thakur, Madhubani Painting got official recognition in 1970 when the President of India gave an award to Mrs. Jagdamba Devi of village Jitbarpur near Madhubani. Besides her, two other painters Mrs Sita Devi and Mrs Mahasundari Devi, were also given national awards in this field. Madhubani was affected with terrible drought and famine in 1967 and as a relief measure certain light manual scheme, for instance Sikki wares and folk Paintings on paper were started in old Darbhanga district to provide work to the women of the middle classes to save them from starving. In villages around Madhubani,

these schemes received a tremendous response, and as an experimental measure, the paintings done by the women-folk were exhibited in New Delhi. There was spontaneous appreciation from all quarters and this soon attracted an international market for these paintings.

Since the 1970s when Madhubani art was promoted by the Indian Government as an expression of India's ancient civilization, the women of Mithilā have experienced the problem of explaining their art to the outside world. While elite attention and patronage the Maithila women have received for their art has been unique, the meaning their audiences seek in their art work in nowhere present in the world view of women who have traditionally made these paintings as their life cycle rituals or as an expression of their position in the society.

The Mithilā painting is one of the living creative activities of the woman of this region. It is a famous folk painting on paper, cloth, a readymade garment, movable objects etc, mainly by the village women of Mithilā. Originally it is a folk art, practiced by the women of all castes and communities, on walls and floors using the natural and vegetable colours. Later some people took interest in it and motivated the women to translate their art from walls and floors to the canvas and now the new form has given this a very distinct identity in the art world as well as in the market. This folk art has a history, a cultural background, women's monopoly and distinct regional identification.

From very ancient times, women of the region practised their own rites and rituals and had developed a tradition of making floor and wall paintings known locally as *aripan* and *bhitticitras* respectively. These paintings were made inside the inner rooms of Maithila households and were not known to the outside world till 1934 when they were discovered by W. G. Archer, a British civil servant and later on promoted as an artistic tradition by the Indian Government. For the first few years Upper caste women

initiated the transition by transferring the ritualistic wall paintings on paper. Inspired by contacts from the outside world, these artists began making painting on paper and canvas with themes ranging from Kohabaras, divinities to scenes from day today village life.

The book Madhubani painting is divided into five chapters with various sub sections and headings. In the first chapter, Professor Thakur has given an idea of the historical and geographical position of Mithilā, its foundation and different interpretations of its mythical names, and the various sources from which information relating to the political and cultural history of Mithilā have been gleaned. He has also tried to present a short sketch of the Janaka to Khaṇḍavalā dynasties, and the political, social, economic, literary and religious conditions and philosophical attainments of Mithilā. He has discussed the various cultural aspects of the people in Mithilā.

In the second chapter of the Madhubani painting, Professor Thakur has discussed about the origin and development of the folk art. Unlike the Greeks, man in India was regarded as a part of nature and the representation of man or of gods was indispensably associated with the representation of such lovely forms of nature as could be in harmony with it. In Mithilā painting, man is invariably part of nature like a flower on a creeper, or the green foliage of trees, and the spirit of them both is so realised that the one is never in conflict with the other. It is here that the streams of inner and outer life mingle together. Painting is generally done by folk artists or classical artists in three ways: wall-painting (*bhitticitra*), Canvas-Painting (paṭa-citra) and floor-painting (bhūmi-śobhā or *aripan*). Of these the wall painting and the floor-painting are very popular in Mithilā. As we know, the tradition of decorating walls and ceilings goes back to the hoary past of which the famous fresco paintings at Ajanta and Bagh are monumental examples. The tradition, like many other

parts of India, has been carried on since time immemorial in Bihar and particularly in Mithilā by the womenfolk who decorate the outer and inner walls of their houses on auspicious occasions or rituals or bratas (vratas). While in south Bihar, this wall-painting is known as urehanā, in Mithilā it is known as bhitti-śobhā or Kohabara lekhana. In the former painting is generally by males or females who are mālī (gardeners) by caste, in the latter it is always the womenfolk who indulge in this absorbing pastime.

According to Professor Thakur, it is interesting to note in this connection that Mithilā maintained her traditional customs and rituals through an elaborate study of the ancient texts which had gradually lost their importance in other parts of northern India in the course of centuries. It is only in Mithilā that for every major sanskāra, a particular kind of *aripana* is drawn, while its authentic form is maintained in every household. The origin of this continuity may be traced to the continuous spell of Hindu rule in Mithilā from 1097 A.D. to 1550 A.D. under the Karṇāṭas and the Oinavāras which continued uninterruptedly under the Khaṇḍavalā dynasty till the present day.

In the third chapter of his text, Professor Upendra Thakur has given a detail description of Madhubani Painting. He says that a portrait of Kālī with a garland of flowers, or Durgā with eight arms, wearing a sāḍī and hairstyle in the ancient tradition is sure to surprise an art-lover and made him feel inquisitive about it. These are specimens of folk-paintings of Mithilā, popularly known as Madhubani painting. It was W.G. Archer with his perspective curiosity who first drew attention to the mural paintings of the Brāhmaṇa and Kāyastha village communities of Mithilā, and styled them as Maithila Painting. The artists of Mithilā Painting are merely housewives who do not go to any school to learn the art of painting. Like aripana, the wall paintings are also done by unlettered bells who are born Piccasos. Every girl learns this art from her mother

and near and dear ones at an early age. In spite of stringent financial conditions these talented ladies have been decorating their walls and enclosures on every social, and religious occasion with beautiful paintings full of aesthetic values which at once dazzle the eye and captivate the mind and heart exposed to their ministration.

Professor Thakur says that the paintings very from village to village. Though there is individuality in the work, it is recognizable by style and character. According to him, like the paintings, the crafts of Mithilā, such as terracotta figurines and artistic utility articles (Sikkī work, embroidery Sujanī etc.) are enriched by its religious and cultural traditions which can be seen in the use of the motives like Cakra, Śaṅkha, Kālavajra, Sūrya, Candramā, triśūla, ḍamaru, and Vajraratna. Besides above mentioned arts Professor Thakur has also described the other traditional folk arts of Mithilā in his monumental work.

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Aspects of Society and Economy of Medieval Mithilā

The last book on Mithilā of Professor Upendra Thakur is *Aspects of Society and Economy of Medieval Mithilā* was published by Janaki Prakashan, Patna in 1988. This monograph is based on the inaugural lectures which was delivered by Professor Upendra Thakur in C.M. College, Darbhanga on 10th May, 1983. The subject of the lectures selected by him pertains to an important branch of the cultural history of Mithilā on which almost nothing has been written by scholars so far. Although the present study could not be regarded as exhaustive, nonetheless it presents an interesting outline for the first time which might be useful for researchers in the field.

Professor Thakur has described in his present book some important aspects of socio-economic life of medieval Mithilā which had not yet fully attracted the notice of the historians. Some of the traits of the cultural life of the people during this period are so fascinating, so absorbing that it is hard to come across its parallel elsewhere in the country. The advent of the fourteenth century witnessed a significant change in the social structure of the Maithilas significant because it violently took up the structure of the society. The new change was the introduction of the Maithila Kulinism a legacy later borrowed by Bengal and Assam. Professor Thakur says, the credit for the so called re-organisation of the society (1310–1313 A.D.) goes entirely to King Harisiṃhadeva, and as a consequence the Maithilas (both Brāhmaṇa and Karaṇa Kāyasthas) gave birth to an elaborate system of genealogical records, called

in common parlance, the Pañjīs or Pañjī-prabandha which may be compared with the Kuljī text of Bengal, the burañjī text of Asssam the madalasa Pañjī of Orissa as well as the genealogies of the Kings of Nepal (Vaṃśāvalī) and the early Indian record giving genealogical accounts. It is said that the system was introduced with a view to protecting the purity of blood in Maithila society by making people record their ancestry, and avoiding the forbidden degrees of relationship in marriages.

In the first chapter of his work Professor Thakur has given a detail description of the Pañjī system of Mithilā. The historicity of the Pañjī is also substantiated by Kumārila's statement when he says that the kulīnas or Mahākulīnas always took into consideration the demerits of a particular caste which usually found mention in the individual *samūhalekhya* of the period at the time of negotiating marriages of their sons or daugthers. This tradition was also in vogue in the time of Kumārila as is clear from his statement. Moreover, several hundred years before Kumārila Manu, Yājñavalkya and others had also stressed upon this aspect of caste and prescribed penances for purification of blood.

Professor Thakur says, the population of the Maithila Brāhmaṇas had increased immensely and they were scattered in different places in medieval period. Moreover, the Brāhmaṇas other than the Maithilas had also come and settled in Mithilā and the necessity for more organised action in respect of the marriage rules was greatly felt. It was found that the existing record of the above entries (*Samūhalekhya*, kept individually by the high-ups in the society) was defective. The story goes that a Maithila Brāhmaṇa, resident of Sataghara (Madhubani), Paṇḍita Harinātha Upādhyāya, the celebrated scholar of the Smṛtisāra and one of the recognised authorities on Dharmaśāstra had, by an overnight, contracted a marriage not in consonance with Śāstric texts. Once his was

alleged to have had an illicit connection with a Cāṇḍāla and made to submit to an ordeal to prove her innocence by taking a fire ball in her hands, a test in practice in those days. On careful scrutiny, it was found that her husband was impure because he had married lady who was not as enjoined by the Śāstra, sufficiently removed in descent of relationship. This incident created a deep sensation in the whole of Mithilā, because on further scrutiny it was found that not only Paṇḍita Upādhyāya but many such scholars of his rank had not cared much about the correctness of their genealogical records which resulted in impure marriages throughout the land. We are told that Paṇḍita Upādhyāya felt so much humiliated at this incident that he undertook to write in Sanskrit, and compound in 1326 A.D. a genealogy of the Maithila Kāyasthas which is since that year kept with scrupulous exactness upto date with fresh entries made from time to time. King Harisiṃha deva, the last great Kṣatriya ruler of the Karṇāṭa dynasty of Mithilā was interested himself in the said genealogy and marriage customs of Mithilā. He not only supervised the marriages done according to the sastric rules, but made classification of Maithila Brāhmaṇas and Kāyasthas, according to their religious observance.

According to Professor Thakur, the condition of women was quite unsatisfactory and they were wholly subjected to and guided by the dictates of their lords and were always confined within the limits of their houses. Devoid of her husband's protection a chaste woman had no their place where she could live in peace and happiness and she could not even go to her parent's house without his consent. Women of the higher castes practised *pardā*. The rigidity of the *pardā* system was responsible for their being subjected to gruesome social tyranny as their very appearance in the public came to be treated as the most shocking scandal. The Hindus adopted the custom from the Muhammadans under the stress of circumstances

which in turn brought about their social, political and intellectual stagnation. Widow-marriage, though prevalent among the lower order was strictly prohibited among the higher castes. Satī was an established institution during this period and it continued to flourish as before in spite of several attempts made by Akbar and Jahangir to suppress or regulate the rite. The Brāhmaṇa priest played a prominent part in satī sacrifices. The queen of Rājā Puruṣottama Ṭhākura of the Khaṇḍavalā dynasty is said to have practised satī on the death of her husband; Rāghavapriyā, the wife of Rājā Rāghava Siṃha also burnt herself to death on the funeral pyre of her husband.

On the birth of Kulīnism, Professor Thakur says that side by side with child-marriage, triumphant Kulīnism and dowry system increased during the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth centuries which was responsible for the creation of sub-classes in the Brāhmaṇas hierarchy, the rise of the *Bikauās* and other institutions like the Ghaṭakas, the Pañjīkāras, etc., in the Maithila society. The institution of Kulīnism marks an important landmark in the social history of Mithilā and Bengal. Scholars sharply differ about the origin and growth of this system, but a close scrutiny of the relevant records bearing on Kulīnism would leave no doubt that the birth of Kulīna in Mithilā was a natural corollary of the introduction of the Pañjī, although it existed in some from or other even during the time of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa and much earlier of which we have indirect references in Manu, Yājñavalkya, Gautama etc.

Professor Thakur says that slavery was an established institution in Mithilā. The slaves were a product of the feudal order, had nothing of their own and were completely at the mercy of their owners who could dispose them of as they pleased to like so many commodities. There are various kinds of state –papers, judgements, grant-deeds, slave-deeds and contracts, known as *Gaurīvacāṭikā patras,*

Bahī-Khātās, Ajātapatras or Cāṭilas, Akarārapatras, or Janaudhī and Nistārapatras, which throws light on this problem.

Mithilā has been the centre of Sanskrit learning since times immemorial and no other part of India can boast of an unbroken tradition of scholarship from the heavy age of the Vedas down to the present time. In the time of the great Gaṅgeśa scholars from different parts of the country came to receive the highest training in logic and other branches of learning in the universally accepted University of Mithilā. While in the medieval period Oinavāra dynasty was made famous in the literary world by the erudite and versatile scholar, Jagaddhara, the Mithilā of Śivasiṃha, was made famous in the world of letters by the celebrated poet, Vidyāpati who besides being a great poet of Maithili, was also a great scholar of Sanskrit. He wrote on smṛti (Vibhāgasāra, Gaṅgā-Vākyāvalī and Dāna Vākyāvalī) on Pūjā or moral tales (Puruṣa-parīkṣā), on Pūja (Śaivasarvasvasāra) and Durgābhakti-taraṅgiṇī and on literary composition (Likhanāvalī).

According to Professor Upendra Thakur the rule of the Khaṇḍavalā dynasty (c.1556 A.D. onwards) was really the golden age of Sanskrit learning in Mithilā. Like the Karṇāṭas and the Oinavāras, the scholar Kings of this line generously patronised learning and art in their star-studded courts. Mm. Maheśa Ṭhākura the founder of the dynasty was himself one of the brightest literary gems that illumined the period. His greatest contribution to the course of Sanskrit learning was however the establishment of the famous institution of *Dhauta-vastra-parīkṣā* in Mithilā. It was a compulsory system of examination which the Paṇḍitas of Mithilā had to get through, to get due recognition of their erudite scholarship and learning at the royal court. This official examination system of the Darbhanga Raj, popularly known as the Dhauta-Parīkṣā of which a syllabus was latter published under

the supervision of Mm. Ganganatha Jha, was based on the old Maithila system of Śalākā-parīkṣā where the candidate was allowed even to have his books by his side when the experts took his invoice. The old system of taking *Ṣaḍayantra* (Śarayantra) was, however, no longer current. In this system, the scholar was even required to present himself for examination by the public. The scholar, who is to take *Ṣaḍayantra* could be asked any question on any topic, the people like to similarly the institutions of Upādhyāyas, Mahopādhyāyas, and Mahāmaho-pādhyāyas as graded degrees of seniority among Professors are now extinct. The family of Maheśa Ṭhākura was a family of celebrated scholars and philosophers.

Professor Thakur has given a short note on the origin and development of Maithili language and literature. He says that a living language with an unbroken continuity Maithilī was in a sense discovered by George Grierson who studied this language and other Bihari dialects indicating their true position within the family of the modern Indo- Aryan languages. One of the oldest languages, its impact on contemporary literature, such as Assamese, Bengali (a celebrated home of Sanskrit learning, Mithilā attracted scholars from Bengal for some three hundred years), Oriya and Nepalese has been enormous. The early scholars of Mithilā, though deeply engrossed in Sanskrit learning and culture, found time for brilliant compositions in their mother-tongue. The writings of Jyotirīśvara Ṭhākura and Vidyāpati, the greatest lyric poet of Eastern India, are notable examples. About the origin and development of Maithili script is also described by Professor Thakur in this chapter.

In the second chapter of his monograph, Professor Thakur says, the economic condition of the people was on the whole satisfactory during the sixteenth and the middle of the seventeenth centuries A.D., but towards the end of Shah Jahan's reign the condition of the peasantry

grew worse all over the country. In Mithilā and other parts of the country highways became thoroughly unsafe and evils of pauperism increased widely. The condition of the peasantry or ryots under the Khaṇḍavalā was not at all happy. A state of lawlessness prevailed. The Rājās of this dynasty had to fight several battles which dangerously affected the economy of the country. Besides several litigation suits, claim-tillas etc. made the confusion worse confounded. Mithilā may rightly be termed as the land of floods and famines. The abundance of rivers, while it certainly favoured agriculture, was also a couse of perpetual sorrow to the inhabitants of the land. It had to experience floods and famines which often were devastating in their effect, and the area liable to floods, roughly speaking was the country between the Bāgamatī and the little Gaṇḍaka, the southern part of the Hajipur subdivision and the low-lying tract in the south- east of Darbhanga. Besides the Bāgamatī, the Kamalā and Kosī rivers have been notorious for floods and diseases. While Madhubani sub-division has been the worst victim to the unabating fury of the former, the district of Darbhanga, Saharsa, Purnea and Munger have been subjected to the horrible devastations caused by the latter aptly described as the "River of Sorrow".

On the trade and Industry, Professor Thakur says, since the land was intersected by nearly twenty rivers and many lakes, trade in Mithilā was in a prosperous condition and there were numerous land and river routes to carry articles to and from different places. Since the beginning of the Christian era and even earlier, Mithilā had been carrying on trade, both in exports and imports, with different parts of the country. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, foreign migrants the Dutch, the Portuguese, the French and the English established themselves first in Bengal and then in Tirhut. The advent of these new elements had a tremendous effect on agriculture and industry of Tirhut. Several articles- sugarcane,

tobacco, paper etc. came to be produced on a large scale from purely commercial point of view. Among the major industries of the nineteenth century the following deserve special mention - opium, sugar, indigo and saltpetre, and among the subsidiary industries jute, tobacco, mixed cloth, woollen cloth, carpentry and other small industries such as paper making, soap-making and glass manufacture were in a flourishing condition till as late as the early part of the twentieth century.

Thus, this work presents an analysis of the different trends in the field of economy during mediaeval period and highlights for the first time the growth of trade and commerce and its ultimate decline with the advent of the East India company on the political horizon of the country. The present work of Professor Thakur may be termed as the first study of its kind of the various currents and cross-current in socio-economic life of mediaeval Mithilā which for long will serve as a guide book to the researchers in the field.

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Conclusion

Professor Upendra Thakur was a soft-spoken bespectacled teacher dressed in spotlessly white *Khadi* Kurta and dhoti without the usual Gandhi cap, walking in chappals. He was gentle and sober, pliable and obliging, but could be equally firm and forceful, when challenged and provoked for no fault of his own. He was capable of taking even heavy weight in adverse situation where shines his best. He was no doubt a God-fearing man and his Rudrākṣa-mālā, his constant companion, ensured him protection against adversities.

About his early life, Professor Thakur has himself written- "Youths of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh used to go to Kolkata for higher studies. Lack of universities and poverty were two main reasons behind this. Thus, it was difficult for a person belonging from a middle-class family to pay for colleges. There was only one city in north India which welcomed both financially rich and poor people and it was Kolkata. I, too, was among one of these youths. After getting my intermediate degree in 1945, I went to Kolkata in search of higher education".

Professor Thakur possessed all rare qualities but what impressed me most was his courteous nature. Anybody going to him was bound to be received with open arms and big-heartedness. As an educationist, Professor Thakur earned great repute far and wide. He was deemed as a great scholar. He was very successful both as a teacher and a great writer. He was very popular amongst student. He was called as "Guruji" in the university campus of Bodhgaya. We all are aware of the present day deplorable condition of the universities as to how the teachers indulge

in politics, neglecting the teaching and so also students, deeply engrossed in ugly demonstrations for redressal of fair or foul grievances, unseemly behaviour with teachers, etc. The situation in the universities has become so uncomfortable and disquieting that some peace loving renowned educationist feel shy to be Vice-chancellor or Registrar of a university. They apprehend misbehaviour of students and staff both. But Professor Upendra Thakur was highly respected by the students so much so that no student dare to misbehave in his presence both in the classes and outside. He was honoured as super Vice-Chancellor by the students and staffs of the university.

Professor Thakur holds a unique place in the galaxy of historians who gave a new trend, a new direction to the writing of history in India. He published over two hundred research papers and review articles besides three dozen books of high order in English, Hindi and Maithili, on different branches of Indology which for long will serve as a guide-line to the researchers.

Professor Thakur stands out as a bold and fearless Indologist who advocated scientific treatment of historical traditions. A man of pleasing disposition and charming manners, Professor Thakur presented a happy combination of scholarship and noble character. He has keen sense of duty and he never deviated from the path of rectitude, modest and quite unassuming in his manners. He had a passion for learning and he had literally grown with it.

Professor Thakur adopted *gārhasthya-dharma* and was married to Rama Devi. Smt. Rama Devi is a pious lady. She is called as 'memdai' by her brothers such as Professor Indra Kant Jha. Her only son Professor Vijay Kumar Thakur was renowned historian but unfortunately after the death of her husband her only son also died at an early age. Professor Thakur was a staunch supporter of his students and he always believed in them. His helping attitude was like God Śiva. But some selfish elements

became 'Bhasmāsura' for him and last times of Professor Thakur were not good. He was deeply involved in litigation and he always lived with mental tension. For this reason, his life became very short and due to a cardiac attack, he died on 20th December 1991.

A great patriot, and a gentleman par excellence Professor Thakur was like a friend, philosopher and guide to all those who came into contact with him. Be he educated or illiterate, rich or poor he made no distinction between man and man and was every willing to help all, irrespective of caste, creed and religion. Today, as never before, we need the services of Indologists like him who had a scientific and highly objective outlook on matters and problems affecting the people and the country in order to bring out a greater sense of oneness and integration.

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Appendix

Publications of Professor Upendra Thakur

1. Works Published on Mithilā and Maithili

(a) English

1. *History of Mithilā*, Published by the Government of Bihar under auspices of the Mithilā Research Institute, Darbhanga, 1956. 2nd Edition in 1988.
2. *Studies in Jainism and Buddhism in Mithilā*, Published by Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Varanasi, 1964.
3. *Madhubani Painting*, Abhinava Publication, New Delhi, 1982.
4. *Socio-economic life in Early Medieval Mithilā*, Janaki Prakashan, Patna 1988.

(b) Maithili

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2. *Mithilāk Citrakalā O Śilpakalā*, Maithili Akademy, Patna, 1987.
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2. Other Works

(a) English

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2. *The Hūṇas in India*, Published by Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Varanasi, 1972.
3. *Mints and Mintings in India*, Published by Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Varanasi, 1972.
4. *Some Aspects of Ancient Indian History and Culture*, Abhinava Publication, New Delhi, 1974.

5. *Homicide in Ancient India*, Abhinava Publication, New Delhi, 1978.
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7. *The Heritage of India* (Ed.) L.N. Mishra Com. Vol., New Delhi, 1979.
8. *On Kārttikeya*, Chowkhamba Orientalia, New Delhi, 1981.
9. *India and Laos* (A study in cultural contacts) (Ed.) Books Today, New Delhi, 1981.
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18. *Seventy-five Years of Bihar*, Bihar Research Society, Patna, 1987.
19. *India and Japan, A Cultural Symphony*, Abhinava Publication, New Delhi.
20. *India and Thailand* (Edited), Books Today, New Delhi.
21. *India and China*, Associated Book Sellers, Agra.
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2. *Prachina Bharata*, Chowkhamba, Varanasi.
3. *Mughala Kalina Bharat*, Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi.
4. *Adhunika Bharata*, Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi.
5. *Bauddha Dharma: Desha-Videsha men*, Bhagwan Buddha Parishad, Mahnar.

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2. "An Introduction to Madhubani Painting", *Rtam* (B.R. Saksena Fel. Vol.) Lucknow, 1983.
3. "Currency of Tirhut during the early years of companies Rule", *JNBI*, 1958.
4. "The Institution of Slavery in Mithilā", *IHQ*, 1959.
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31. "Gold Coins of Śivasiṃha", Journal of Numismatic Society of India, Pt. 3, 1957.
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3. "Forms and Features of Governmental System in the age of the Rāmāyaṇa", *Early Indian Political and Administrative Systems*, Ed. D.C. Sircar, Calcutta University, 1971.
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2. Chairman: Section B, South Asia, 32nd Congress for Asian and North African studies, Bamburg, West Germany, 1986.
3. President: World Conference of Buddhist Scholars, Colombo, 1982.
4. Panel Chairman: Fourth Conference of the International Buddhist Association, Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.A. 1981.
5. Panel Chairman: From Third to Twelfth Conferences of the International Buddhist Brotherhood Association, Tokyo-Bodhgaya, 1978–1986.
6. Chief Editor: Proceedings of the International Buddhist Brotherhood Association, Tokyo-Bodhgaya.
7. President: 70th Conference of the Numismatic Society India, Ujjain, 1982.
8. General Secretary: Numismatic Society of India, 77–82.
9. Chief Editor: Journal of the Numismatic Society of India, Varanasi (1982–85).
10. Life Member, Numismatic Society of India, Varanasi, 1975–82.
11. President: Indian History and Cultural Society, Sagar, 1987.
12. President: Akhil Bharatiya Itihasa Sankalan Samiti (U.P.) 5th Annual Conference, Varanasi, 1985.
13. President: Section IV: Indian History Congress, Hyderabad, 1978.
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